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Mrs. F. C. Amisworth  
The Concord







# AUCTION BRIDGE

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## UP-TO-DATE

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By W. DALTON

AUTHOR OF

"BRIDGE ABRIDGED," "BRIDGE AT A GLANCE," ETC.

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*CONTAINING THE LAWS OF AUCTION BRIDGE, AS  
FRAMED BY A JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE  
PORTLAND AND BATH CLUBS, AND APPROVED  
AND ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE OF THE  
PORTLAND CLUB.*

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NEW YORK:  
WYCIL & CO.

1910.

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gift  
Certificate of  
Hon. Fred. C. Ammon  
Aug 13 1896



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# PREFACE

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THIS work was originally intended to appear as a second edition of "Auction Bridge," published in 1908; but, on going over that book for revision, I found it necessary to alter it so very materially, that it has been determined to publish a new book on the game, under the present title. A certain amount of the old book remains, but the chapters dealing with the declaration have been re-written entirely, and the principles of declaring now advocated are very different from, and in some cases diametrically opposed to, those recommended in my first book.

I make no apology for this change of front, because it is none of my doing. The change has been brought about, almost entirely, by the new Law limiting the loss on a declaration of "One Spade" to 100 points. As long as the loss was unlimited, the best players adopted a certain line of play, which was fully described in my first book. On page 67 of "Auction Bridge" I said: "The new rule has not become law at the time of writing, so I can say nothing as to the operation of it." It has since become law, and I can now speak as to the operation of it. It has transformed the methods of declaring rudimentally. The methods which were in vogue eighteen months ago are now out of date, and the new methods will be found fully described in the following pages.

W. DALTON.



LAWS OF AUCTION BRIDGE.



# THE LAWS OF AUCTION BRIDGE

*Framed by a Joint Committee of the  
PORTLAND and BATH CLUBS, and approved and adopted  
by the Committee of the PORTLAND CLUB (1909).*



## THE RUBBER.

1. The rubber is the best of three games. If the first two games be won by the same players, the third game is not played.

## SCORING.

2. A game consists of thirty points obtained by tricks alone, exclusive of any points counted for Honours, Chicane, Slam, Bonus, or Under-tricks.

3. Every hand is played out, and any points in excess of the thirty points necessary for the game are counted.

4. When the declarer (*vide* Law 50) makes good his declaration by winning at least as many

tricks as he declared to win, each trick above 6 counts :—

2	points	when	Spades	are	trumps.
4	„	„	Clubs	„	
6	„	„	Diamonds	„	
8	„	„	Hearts	„	
12	„	„	there are	no	trumps.

These values become respectively 4, 8, 12, 16, and 24 when the declaration has been doubled ; and 8, 16, 24, 32, and 48 when the declaration has been re-doubled (*vide* Law 56).

5. Honours consist of ace, king, queen, knave, and ten of the trump suit. When there are no trumps they consist of the four aces.

6. Honours in trump suits are thus reckoned :—  
If a player and his partner conjointly hold—

- I. The five honours of the trump suit, they score for honours five times the value of the trump suit trick.
- II. Any four honours of the trump suit, they score for honours four times the value of the trump suit trick.
- III. Any three honours of the trump suit, they score for honours twice the value of the trump suit trick.

If a player in his own hand holds—

- I. The five honours of the trump suit, he and his partner score for honours ten times the value of the trump suit trick.
- II. Any four honours of the trump suit, he and his partner score for honours eight times the value of the trump suit trick; and if his partner holds the fifth honour, nine times the value of the trump suit trick.

The value of the trump suit trick referred to in this law is its original value—*e.g.*, two points in spades and six points in diamonds; and the value of honours is in no way affected by any doubling or re-doubling.

7. HONOURS, when there are no trumps, are thus reckoned:—

If a player and his partner conjointly hold—

- I. The four aces, they score for honours forty points.
- II. Any three aces, they score for honours thirty points.

If a player in his own hand holds—

The four aces, he and his partner score for honours one hundred points.

These values are in no way affected by doubling or re-doubling.

8. CHICANE is thus reckoned:—

If a player holds no trump, he and his partner score for Chicane twice the value of the trump suit trick. The value of Chicane is in no way affected by any doubling or re-doubling.

9. SLAM is thus reckoned:—

If a player and his partner make, independently of any tricks taken for the revoke penalty—

I. All thirteen tricks, they score for Grand Slam forty points.

II. Twelve tricks, they score for Little Slam twenty points.

10. Honours, Chicane, Slam, Bonus, and points for Under-tricks are reckoned in the score at the end of the rubber.

11. At the end of the rubber, the total scores for Tricks, Honours, Chicane, Slam, Bonus, and Under-tricks obtained by each player and his partner are added up, two hundred and fifty points are added to the score of the winners of the rubber, and the difference between the two scores is the number of points won, or lost, by the winners of the rubber.

12. If an erroneous score affecting Tricks, Bonus, or Under-tricks be proved, such mistake may be corrected prior to the conclusion of the game in which it occurred, and such game is not concluded until the last card of the following deal has been dealt, or, in the case of the last game of the rubber, until the score has been made up and agreed.

13. If an erroneous score affecting Honours, Chicane, and Slam be proved, such mistake may be corrected at any time before the score of the rubber has been made up and agreed.

### CUTTING.

14. The ace is the lowest card.

15. In all cases, every player must cut from the same pack.

16. Should a player expose more than one card, he must cut again.

### FORMATION OF TABLE.

17. If there are more than four candidates, the players are selected by cutting, the first six in the room having the right of belonging to the table, which is complete with six players. The candidates who cut the next lowest cards have a prior right to any after-comer to enter the table.

18. The four who cut the lowest cards play the first rubber; they cut for partners, and the two lowest play against the two highest. The lowest is the dealer, and he has choice of cards and seats, and, having once made his selection, must abide by it.

19. Two players cutting cards of equal value, unless such cards are the two highest, cut again; should they be the two lowest, a fresh cut is necessary to decide which of those two deals.

20. Three players cutting cards of equal value cut again; should the fourth (or remaining) card be the highest, the two lowest of the new cut are partners, the lower of those two the dealer; should the fourth card be the lowest, the two highest are partners, the original lowest the dealer.

### CUTTING OUT.

21. At the end of a rubber, should admission be claimed by one, or two candidates, the player who has, or the players who have, played a greater number of consecutive rubbers than the others is, or are, out; but when all have played the same number, they must cut to decide upon the out-goers; the highest are out.

## ENTRY AND RE-ENTRY.

22. A candidate, whether he has played or not, can join a table which is not complete by declaring in at any time prior to any of the players having cut a card, either for the purpose of commencing a fresh rubber or of cutting out.

23. In the formation of fresh tables, the candidates who have neither belonged to nor played at any other table have the prior right of entry; the others decide their right of admission by cutting.

24. Any one quitting a table prior to the conclusion of a rubber may, with consent of the other three players, appoint a substitute in his absence during that rubber.

25. A player joining one table, whilst belonging to another, loses his right of re-entry into the latter, and takes his chance of cutting in, as if he were a fresh candidate.

26. If any one break up a table, the remaining players have the prior right to him of entry into any other; and should there not be sufficient vacancies at such other table to admit all those candidates, they settle their precedence by cutting.

### SHUFFLING.

27. The pack must neither be shuffled below the table nor so that the face of any card can be seen.

28. The pack must not be shuffled during the play of the hand.

29. A pack, having been played with, must neither be shuffled by dealing it into packets, nor across the table.

30. Each player has a right to shuffle once only (except as provided by Law 33) prior to a deal, after a false cut, or when a new deal has occurred.

31. The dealer's partner must collect the cards for the ensuing deal, and has the first right to shuffle that pack.

32. Each player, after shuffling, must place the cards, properly collected and face downwards, to the left of the player about to deal.

33. The dealer has always the right to shuffle last; but should a card or cards be seen during his shuffling, or whilst giving the pack to be cut, he may be compelled to re-shuffle.

## THE DEAL.

34. Each player deals in his turn ; the order of dealing goes to the left.

35. The player on the dealer's right cuts the pack, and, in dividing it, must not leave fewer than four cards in either packet ; if in cutting, or in replacing one of the two packets on the other, a card be exposed, or if there be any confusion of the cards or a doubt as to the exact place in which the pack was divided, there must be a fresh cut.

36. When a player, whose duty it is to cut, has once separated the pack, he cannot alter his cut ; moreover, he can neither re-shuffle nor re-cut the cards.

37. After the pack has been cut, should the dealer shuffle the cards, the pack must be cut again.

38. The fifty-two cards shall be dealt face downwards. The deal is not completed until the last card has been dealt face downwards. There is no misdeal.

## A NEW DEAL.

39. There must be a new deal—

- I. If, during a deal, or during the play of a hand, the pack be proved to be incorrect or imperfect.
- II. If any card be faced in the pack.
- III. Unless the cards are dealt into four packets, one at a time and in regular rotation, beginning at the player to the dealer's left.
- IV. Should the last card not come in its regular order to the dealer.
- V. Should a player have more than thirteen cards, and any one or more of the others less than thirteen cards.
- VI. Should the dealer deal two cards at once, or two cards to the same hand, and then deal a third ; but if, prior to dealing that card, the dealer can, by altering the position of one card only, rectify such error, he may do so.
- VII. Should the dealer omit to have the pack cut to him, and the adversaries discover the error prior to the last card being dealt, and before looking at their cards.

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40. If, whilst dealing, a card be exposed by either of the dealer's adversaries, the dealer or his partner may claim a new deal. A card similarly exposed by the dealer or his partner, gives the same claim to each adversary. The claim may not be made by a player who has, or whose partner has, looked at any of his cards. If a new deal does not take place, the exposed card cannot be called.

41. If however, in dealing, one of the last cards be exposed, and the dealer has completed the deal before there is reasonable time to decide as to a fresh deal, the privilege is not thereby lost.

42. If the dealer, before he has dealt fifty-one cards, look at any card, his adversaries have a right to see it, and may exact a new deal.

43. Should three players have their right number of cards, and the fourth have less than thirteen, and not discover such deficiency until he has played any of his cards, the deal stands good; should he have played, he is answerable for any revoke he may have made, as if the missing card, or cards, had been in his hand; he may search the other pack for it, or them.

44. If a pack, during or after a rubber, be proved incorrect or imperfect, such proof does not alter any past score, game, or rubber; that hand in which the imperfection was detected is null and void, and the dealer must deal again.

45. Any one dealing out of turn, or with the adversaries' cards, may be stopped before the last card is dealt, otherwise the deal stands good, and the game must proceed as if no mistake has been made.

46. A player can neither shuffle, cut, nor deal for his partner without the permission of his opponents.

### DECLARING TRUMPS.

47. The dealer having examined his hand, must declare to win at least the odd trick, but he may declare to win more. He must declare whether the hand shall be played with or without trumps; in the former case, he must name which suit shall be trumps. The lowest declaration he can make is "One Spade"—*i.e.*, he declares to win at least one odd trick, spades being trumps.

48. After the dealer has made his declaration, each player in turn, commencing with the player on the dealer's left, has the right to make a higher declaration, or to double the last declaration made, or to re-double a declaration which has been doubled, subject to the provisions of Law 56, or to pass the last declaration. A declaration of a greater number of tricks in a suit of lower value, which equals the last declaration in value of points, shall be considered

a higher declaration—*e.g.*, a declaration of “Two Spades” is a higher declaration than “One Club,” and “Two Diamonds” is higher than “One No Trump.”

49. A player in his turn may overbid the previous declaration any number of times, and may also overbid his partner, but he cannot overbid his own declaration which has been passed by the other three players. When the *final declaration* has been made—*i.e.*, when the last declaration has been *passed* by the other three players—the player who made such declaration (or in the case where both partners have made declarations in the same suit, or of “No Trumps,” the player who made the first of such declarations) shall play the combined hands of himself and of his partner, the latter becoming Dummy.

50. When the player of the two hands (hereinafter termed “the declarer”) wins at least as many tricks as he declared to do, he scores the full value of the tricks won (*see* Laws 2 and 4). When he fails, his adversaries score fifty points for each under-trick—*i.e.*, each trick short of the number declared; or, if the declaration has been doubled, or re-doubled, one hundred or two hundred respectively for each under-trick; neither the declarer nor his adversaries score anything towards the game.

51. The loss to the declarer on the declaration of "One Spade" shall be limited to one hundred points in respect of under-tricks, whether doubled or not, unless either he or his partner have redoubled.

52. If a player make a declaration (other than passing) out of turn, the adversary on his left may demand a new deal, or may allow the declaration so made to stand, when the bidding shall continue as if the declaration had been in order.

53. If a player, in bidding, fail to declare a sufficient number of tricks to overbid the previous declaration, he shall be considered to have declared the requisite number of tricks in the bid which he has made, provided that the number of tricks shall not exceed seven; and his partner shall be debarred from making any further declaration, unless either of his adversaries make a higher declaration or double. If, however, such insufficient declaration be accepted by the next player passing it, or doubling it, or by making a higher declaration, no rectification can be made.

54. After the final declaration has been made, a player is not entitled to give his partner any information as to a previous declaration, whether made by himself or by either adversary; but a player is entitled to inquire, at any time during the play of the hand, what was the final declaration.

## DOUBLING AND RE-DOUBLING.

55. The effect of doubling and re-doubling is that the value of each trick over six is doubled or quadrupled, as provided in Law 4; but it does not alter the value of a declaration—*e.g.*, a declaration of “Two Clubs” is higher than “One Heart,” although the heart declaration has been doubled.

56. Any declaration can be doubled and re-doubled once, but not more; a player cannot double his partner's declaration, or re-double his partner's double, but he may re-double a declaration of his partner's which has been doubled by his adversaries.

57. The act of doubling, or re-doubling, re-opens the bidding. When a declaration has been doubled, or re-doubled, any player, including the player whose declaration has been doubled, or whose double has been re-doubled, can in his proper turn make a further declaration of higher value.

58. When a player whose declaration has been doubled, makes good his declaration by winning at least the declared number of tricks, he scores a bonus which consists of 50 points for winning the number of tricks declared, and 50 points for each additional trick he may win. If he or his partner have re-doubled, the bonus is doubled.

59. If a player double out of turn, the adversary on his left may demand a new deal.

60. When the final declaration has been made (*see* Law 49), the play shall begin, and the player on the left of the declarer shall lead.

61. A declaration once made cannot be altered, except as provided by Law 53.

### 'DUMMY.

62. As soon as a card is led by the eldest hand, *i.e.*, the player on the left of the declarer, the declarer's partner shall place his cards face upwards on the table, and the duty of playing the cards from that hand, which is called Dummy, and of claiming and enforcing any penalties arising during the hand, shall devolve upon the declarer, unassisted by his partner.

63. Before placing his cards upon the table, the declarer's partner has all the rights of a player, but after so doing shall take no part whatever in the play, except that he has the right:—

- (a) To ask the declarer whether he has any of a suit which he may have renounced;
- (b) To call the declarer's attention to the fact that too many or too few cards have been played to a trick;

- (c) To correct the claim of either adversary to a penalty to which the latter is not entitled;
- (d) To call attention to the fact that a trick has been wrongly gathered by either side;
- (e) To participate in the discussion of any disputed question of fact, or of law;
- (f) To correct an erroneous score.

If he call attention to any other incident in the play of the hand, in respect of which any penalty might be exacted, the fact that he has done so shall deprive the declarer of the right of exacting such penalty against his adversaries

64. If the declarer's partner, by touching a card, or otherwise, suggest the play of a card from Dummy, either of the adversaries may, but without consulting with his partner, call upon the declarer to play or not to play the card suggested.

65. When the declarer draws a card, either from his own hand or from Dummy, such card is not considered as played until actually quitted.

66. A card once played, or named by the declarer as to be played from his own hand or from Dummy, cannot be taken back, except to save a revoke.

67. The declarer's partner may not look over his adversaries' hands, nor leave his seat for the purpose of watching his partner's play.

68. Dummy is not liable to any penalty for a revoke, as his adversaries see his cards. Should he revoke, and the error not be discovered until the trick is turned and quitted, the trick stands good.

69. The declarer is not liable to any penalty for an error whence he can gain no advantage. Thus, he may expose some, or all of his cards, without incurring any penalty.

### EXPOSED CARDS.

70. If all the cards have been dealt, and before the final declaration has been made, any player expose a card from his hand, the adversary on his left may demand a new deal. If the deal be allowed to stand, the exposed card may be taken up and cannot be called.

71. If, after the final declaration has been made, and before a card is led, the partner of the player who has to lead to the first trick exposes a card from his hand, the declarer may, instead of calling the card, require the leader not to lead the suit of the exposed card.

### CARDS LIABLE TO BE CALLED.

72. All cards exposed by the declarer's adversaries are liable to be called, and must be left face upwards on the table; but a card is not an exposed card when dropped on the floor, or elsewhere below the table.

73. The following are exposed cards:—

- I. Two or more cards played at once.
- II. Any card dropped with its face upwards, or in any way exposed on or above the table, even though snatched up so quickly that no one can name it.

74. If either of the declarer's adversaries play to an imperfect trick the best card on the table, or lead one which is a winning card as against the declarer and his partner, and then lead again, without waiting for his partner to play, or play several such winning cards, one after the other, without waiting for his partner to play, the latter may be called on to win, if he can, the first or any other of those tricks, and the other cards thus improperly played are exposed cards.

75. Should the declarer indicate that all or any of the remaining tricks are his, he may be required to place his cards face upwards on the table; but they are not liable to be called.

76. If either of the declarer's adversaries throws his cards on the table face upwards, such cards are exposed, and liable to be called by the declarer.

77. If all the players throw their cards on the table face upwards, the hands are abandoned, and the score must be left as claimed and

admitted. The hands may be examined for the purpose of establishing a revoke, but for no other purpose.

78. A card detached from the rest of the hand of either of the declarer's adversaries, so as to be named, is liable to be called; but should the declarer name a wrong card, he is liable to have a suit called when first he or his partner have the lead.

79. If a player, who has rendered himself liable to have the highest or lowest of a suit called, or to win or not to win a trick, fail to play as desired, though able to do so, or if when called on to lead one suit, lead another, having in his hand one or more cards of that suit demanded, he incurs the penalty of a revoke.

80. If either of the declarer's adversaries lead out of turn, the declarer may call a suit from him or his partner when it is next the turn of either of them to lead, or may call the card erroneously led.

81. If the declarer lead out of turn, either from his own hand or from Dummy, he incurs no penalty; but he may not rectify the error after the second hand has played, unless called upon by either adversary to do so.

82. If any player lead out of turn, and the other three have followed him, the trick is complete, and the error cannot be rectified; but if

only the second, or the second and third, have played to the false lead, their cards, on discovery of the mistake, can be taken back; and there is no penalty against any one, excepting the original offender, and then only when he is one of the declarer's adversaries.

83. In no case can a player be compelled to play a card which would oblige him to revoke.

84. The call of a card may be repeated until such card has been played.

85. If a player called on to lead a suit have none of it, the penalty is paid.

#### CARDS PLAYED IN ERROR, OR NOT PLAYED TO A TRICK.

86. Should the third hand not have played, and the fourth play before his partner, the latter (not being Dummy or his partner) may be called on to win, or not to win, the trick.

87. If any one (not being Dummy) omit playing to a former trick, and such error be not discovered until he has played to the next, the adversaries may claim a new deal; should they decide that the deal stands good, or should Dummy have omitted to play to a former trick, and such error

be not discovered till he shall have played to the next, the surplus card at the end of the hand is considered to have been played to the imperfect trick, but does not constitute a revoke therein.

88. If any one play two cards to the same trick, or mix a card with a trick to which it does not properly belong, and the mistake be not discovered until the hand is played out, he (not being Dummy) is answerable for all consequent revokes he may have made. If, during the play of the hand, the error be detected, the tricks may be counted face downwards, in order to ascertain whether there be among them a card too many : should this be the case they may be searched, and the card restored ; the player (not being Dummy) is, however, liable for all revokes which he may have meanwhile made.

### THE REVOKE

89. Is when a player (other than Dummy), holding one or more cards of the suit led, plays a card of a different suit.

90. The penalty for each revoke shall be :—

- (a) When the declarer revokes, his adversaries shall score 150 points in addition to any penalty which he may have incurred for not making good his declaration.

- (b) When either of the adversaries revoke, the declarer may score 150 points, or may take three tricks from his opponents and add them to his own. Such tricks taken as a penalty may assist the declarer to make good his declaration, but they shall not entitle him to score any bonus in the case of the declaration having been doubled or re-doubled.

The penalty of 150 points is not affected by doubling or re-doubling.

In no circumstances can partners score anything except for honours or Chicane on a hand in which one of them has revoked.

91. A revoke is established, if the trick in which it occurs has been turned and quitted—*i.e.*, the hand removed from that trick after it has been turned face downwards on the table—or if either the revoking player or his partner, whether in his right turn or otherwise, lead or play to the following trick.

92. A player may ask his partner whether he has not a card of the suit which he has renounced; should the question be asked before the trick is turned and quitted, subsequent turning and quitting does not establish the revoke, and the error may be corrected, unless the question be answered in the negative, or unless the revoking player or his partner have led or played to the following trick.

93. At the end of the hand, the claimants of a revoke may search all the tricks.

94. If a player discover his mistake in time to save a revoke, any player or players who have played after him may withdraw their cards and substitute others, and their cards withdrawn are not liable to be called. If the player in fault be one of the declarer's adversaries, the declarer may call the card thus played in error, or may require him to play his highest or lowest card to that trick in which he has renounced.

95. If the player in fault be the declarer, the eldest hand may require him to play the highest or lowest card of the suit in which he has renounced, provided both of the declarer's adversaries have played to the current trick; but this penalty cannot be exacted from the declarer when he is fourth in hand, nor can it be enforced at all from Dummy.

96. After a revoke has been claimed, if the accused player or his partner mix the cards before they have been sufficiently examined by the adversaries, the revoke is established.

97. A revoke cannot be claimed after the cards have been cut for the following deal.

98. If a revoke occur, be claimed and proved, bets on the odd trick, or on the amount of the score, must be decided by the actual state of the score after the penalty is paid.

99. Should both sides subject themselves to the penalty for a revoke, neither side can score anything except for honours or Chicane; should either or both sides revoke more than once, the side making the fewest revokes scores 150 points for each extra revoke.

### CALLING FOR NEW CARDS.

100. Any player (on paying for them) before, but not after, the pack be cut for the deal, may call for fresh cards. He must call for two new packs, of which the dealer takes his choice.

### GENERAL RULES.

101. Any one during the play of a trick, or after the four cards are played, and before, but not after, they are touched for the purpose of gathering them together, may demand that the cards be placed before their respective players.

102. If either of the declarer's adversaries, prior to his partner playing, should call attention to the trick—either by saying that it is his, or by naming his card, or, without being required so to do, by drawing it towards him—the declarer may require that opponent's partner to play his highest or lowest of the suit then led, or to win or not to win the trick.

103. Should the partner of the player solely entitled to exact a penalty, suggest or demand the enforcement of it, no penalty can be enforced. Should any player claim a penalty to which he is not entitled, he loses his right to exact any penalty.

104. In all cases where a penalty has been incurred, the offender is bound to give reasonable time for the decision of his adversaries.

105. If a bystander make any remark which calls the attention of a player or players to an oversight affecting the score, he is liable to be called on, by the players only, to pay the stakes and all bets on that game or rubber.

106. A bystander, by agreement among the players, may decide any question.

107. A card or cards torn or marked must be either replaced by agreement, or new cards called at the expense of the table.

108. Once a trick is complete, turned, and quitted, it must not be looked at (except under Law 88) until the end of the hand.



## THREE-HANDED AUCTION BRIDGE.

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The Laws are the same as those of Auction Bridge, except as varied by the following :—

I. The game is played by three players, all against all; the table being complete with four players.

II. The player who cuts the lowest card has the first deal; the player cutting the next lowest card sits on the dealer's left, and the remaining player on the dealer's right. The cards are dealt as at Auction Bridge, but the cards dealt to Dummy are not taken up until after the final declaration has been made. If whilst dealing a card be exposed, there must be a new deal.

III. The dealer makes his declaration, and the bidding continues as at Auction Bridge, except that the players sitting opposite each other are not partners, and their declarations are on their own account. There shall be no new deal on account of a player making a declaration out of turn, but the player so offending shall forfeit 50 points to each of the players, the right to declare remaining with the player whose turn it was to make a declaration. The player making the final declara-

tion (*i.e.*, the declaration that has been passed by the other two players) plays his own hand and that of Dummy against the other two players, who then, and for that particular hand, become partners. If one of the players happens to be sitting opposite the declarer, he must move into the vacant seat at the table, thereby facing the player who becomes his partner for that hand.

IV. If, after the deal has been completed, and before a card is led, any player expose a card from his hand, he shall forfeit 100 points to each of the other players; and the declarer—if he be not the offender—may call upon the eldest hand not to lead from the suit of the exposed card. If he does not exercise this right, the card must be left on the table as an exposed card. If the card be exposed by the declarer, after the final declaration has been made, there is no penalty.

V. If a player double out of turn, he forfeits 100 points to each of his adversaries, and the player whose declaration has been so doubled shall have the right to say whether or not the double shall stand. The bidding is then resumed; but if the double has been disallowed, the said declaration cannot be doubled by the player on the right of the offender.

VI. The rubber consists of four games; but when two games have been won by the same player, the other, or others, are not played.

VII. When the declarer makes good his declaration, he scores as at Auction Bridge; when he fails to do so, he loses to each of his adversaries.

VIII. The scoring is the same as at Auction Bridge, except with regard to honours, which are scored by each player severally—*i.e.*, each player who has one honour in spades scores two; each player having two honours in spades scores four; a player holding three honours in spades scores six; a player holding four scores sixteen; and a player holding five honours in spades scores twenty; and similarly for the other suits. In a “no trump” declaration, aces count ten each; and if all four be held by one player, one hundred.

IX. One hundred points are scored by each player for every game he wins, and the winner of the rubber adds a further two hundred and fifty points to his score.

X. At the conclusion of the rubber, the total scores obtained by each player are added up separately, and each player wins from, or loses to, each other player the difference between his score and that of the said other player.



## ETIQUETTE OF AUCTION BRIDGE.

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The following rules belong to the established Etiquette of Auction Bridge. They are not called laws, as it is difficult—in some cases impossible—to apply any penalty to their infraction, and the only remedy is to cease to play with players who habitually disregard them.

It is unfair to purposely make an impossible declaration, or one insufficient to overbid the previous one.

Any one, having the lead and one or more winning cards to play, should not draw a second card out of his hand until his partner has played to the first trick, such act being a distinct intimation that the former has played a winning card.

A player who has looked at his cards, ought not to give any indication by word or gesture as to the nature of his hand, or call the attention of his partner to the score of the game.

A player who desires the cards to be placed, should do it for his own information only, and not in order to invite the attention of his partner.

No player should object to refer to a bystander, who professes himself uninterested in the game and able to decide, a disputed question of facts; as to who played any particular card—whether honours were claimed though not scored, or *vice versa*—etc., etc.

It is unfair to revoke purposely; having made a revoke, a player is not justified in making a second in order to conceal the first.





AUCTION BRIDGE UP-TO-DATE.



# INTRODUCTION.

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AUCTION BRIDGE is an off-shoot from, or, as some players think, an improvement upon, the ordinary game of Bridge.

It is said that the members of the Bath Club, in Dover Street, lay claim to the honour, if honour it be, of having invented the new game. The story, as one of them told it to me, is that one afternoon in 1905 or 1906, instead of starting the customary rubber of Bridge, somebody said, "I am getting tired of this game. Don't you think we could invent something better?" Thereupon they sat down, with the avowed intention of inventing a new card game, and they claim that our present Auction Bridge is the result of their joint deliberations. Oddly enough, this is almost exactly how the birth of Auction Bridge did take place; but it was not at the Bath Club, nor was it anywhere in England, and it was several years prior to 1906.

The game originated in India. Three members of the Indian Civil Service, of whom the gentleman who writes under the *nom de plume* of "John Doe,"

was one, were staying at a far-away hill station, where it was quite impossible to find a fourth Bridge player. They played "Cut-throat" for a time, but, finding that very uninteresting and tedious, they set their wits to work to invent some better three-handed form of the game of Bridge. They did not succeed for some time. Several variations of the game were tried and rejected, until at last one of them conceived the idea (probably borrowed from Vint) of bidding for the declaration, and it caught on at once. On that basis a new game was formulated, and it was, then and there, christened "Auction Bridge." It was exclusively a three-handed game. The idea of adapting it for four players was of much later date, and does not seem to have occurred to the original inventors.

The exact date of its birth is somewhat uncertain. The first record which we have of it is a letter from the late Mr. Oswald Crawford, which appeared in *The Times* of January 16th, 1903. This letter gave a brief outline of the game, and described it as "the new game of Auction Bridge, for three players."

Mr. Crawford had just returned from India, and had, no doubt, seen it played in that country. According to his account of it, the bidding was confined to the first round, "beginning and ending with the dealer"; from which expression I infer that the dealer was allowed two bids, and each of the other players one only.

Another peculiar feature of the game, quite unknown to us, was that, after the final declaration was determined, the two opponents of the declarer could, by mutual consent, either double or halve the value of the declaration. We have never heard of such a thing as "halving," but I presume that the effect of it was to reduce the value of the "no trump" declaration to six points per trick, and "hearts" to four, etc. Mr. Crawford's letter led to a little correspondence in *The Times*, but there the matter ended, and no more was heard of Auction Bridge for a time.

The next thing that happened in connection with it was the publication of a short treatise by "John Doe," entitled "Auction Bridge," and published by the Pioneer Press at Allahabad in 1904. The game, as therein described, was still confined to three players, but it had advanced a little, in that the bidding was not confined to the first round, but could go on *ad infinitum*, as under our present rules. The halving or doubling was still there, and "John Doe" described how it was done. As soon as the declaration was finally decided, the player on the declarer's left could say, "I propose to double," or "I propose to halve." If his partner agreed, the value of the declaration was doubled or halved, the declarer having no further say in the matter. If the partner did not agree to double or halve, the value of the declaration remained

stationary. In other respects the game seems to have been played very much on the present lines.

A further, and much fuller, description of the new game appeared in an article in *The Daily Mail*, on April 24th, 1906, again by Mr. Oswald Crawford. Mr. Crawford seems to have been the real pioneer of the game in England, and I fancy that it was from this article in *The Daily Mail* that the members of the Bath Club drew their inspiration. What they probably did was to transform Auction Bridge from a three-handed game into a four-handed one, and even that reflects great credit upon them.\*

The Bath Club was, undoubtedly, the original home of the game in England, and for a long time it spread no further.

We all heard of it, and most of us tried it, or at any rate watched it; but we were not fascinated by it, and it seemed likely to live and die at the Bath Club.

Then, in the early spring of 1908, Mr. Du Cane started a rubber of "Auction" one afternoon at the Portland Club, and its sudden success was almost magical. From that day to this it has been played there regularly—not entirely to the exclusion of ordinary Bridge, but nearly so.

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\* I am once more indebted to the courtesy of Mr. F. Jessel for much of the above information.—(W.D.)

After that, the circle of Auction Bridge widened very rapidly, and at one time it looked like killing its own parent. Happily that has not come about. The old-fashioned game still flourishes and blossoms, and I have lately fancied that some players are rather tiring of the meretricious substitute, and are inclined to return to their old love.

Whether or not the new game is an improvement upon the old one, is, at present, a matter of opinion, which must be left for the future to decide. The new game has, undeniably, some great advantages over the old one. It offers much greater variety, and it is certainly a more amusing game to play; also, it is not nearly so scientific, which many people will consider to be a great advantage. Again, the rather disproportionate advantage held by the dealer at ordinary Bridge disappears altogether. At Auction Bridge the deal is a disadvantage rather than otherwise.

The most exasperating form of bad luck at ordinary Bridge, familiar to every regular Bridge player, is to hold good hands, on which one could make a useful declaration, when the opponents have the deal, and never to hold a hand of declaring value when it is one's own deal. This does not obtain at all at Auction Bridge. A good hand has always the same value, whoever has the deal. The game is a very dull one indeed when one holds continuous bad hands; but what card game is not

dull and irritating under such conditions? The run of bad luck must indeed be bad when one does not hold an occasional good hand; and whenever that occurs, whenever one holds a hand above the average at Auction Bridge, there is every opportunity of giving it its fullest value, no matter who was dealer, or who had the first right to declare. One really good hand will generally reduce the inflammation a great deal, even if it does not succeed in winning the game.

Auction Bridge is really a clever combination of the two games of Poker and Bridge. It is played on Bridge lines; the scoring, the value of the suits, and the method of playing the cards, are precisely the same as at ordinary Bridge, but the declaration is entirely different; and it is here that the Poker element comes in, and adds an entirely new interest to the game. A clever Poker player, provided that he knows the rudiments of Bridge, will be quite as likely to succeed at Auction Bridge as the most scientific of Bridge players. The scientific Bridge player will be hampered by his preconceived ideas of declaring, and it will take him quite as long to divest himself of these ideas, as it will take the Poker player to acquire the faculty of playing the cards correctly. There is one great point of similarity between Poker and Auction Bridge, and that is that the heaviest losses are not brought about by bad hands, but

by good hands, when one is unlucky enough to come up against adversaries with still better ones.

The opponents of the new game (and they are many) have already dragged out the old threadbare argument, with which every new card game is met, that it is only introduced for purposes of gambling. Precisely the same argument was ventilated when Bridge superseded Whist, but it had no deterrent effect upon the success of Bridge, and it will have none upon the success of Auction Bridge, because it is not true. The points played for must be regulated according to the value of the game. Bridge would have been a very gambling game if it had been played for the same points as Whist, and Auction Bridge would be a gambling game if played for Bridge points ; but, just as the points at Bridge were very soon adjusted to the fresh requirements, so the points at Auction Bridge have already been adjusted to fit the new game.

The bonus given for winning the rubber at Auction Bridge is 250 points, as against 100 points at ordinary Bridge, and this ratio will be found to meet the case quite satisfactorily. If you are in the habit of playing ordinary Bridge for 5s. per 100 points, your stake at Auction Bridge should be 2s. per 100 ; if you are accustomed to play Bridge for 6d. points, or £2 10s. per 100, play Auction for £1 per 100, and you will find that the result is very much the same.

Another argument, and a more specious one, which has been urged against Auction Bridge, is that it cannot be a good game because it will often pay a player better not to try to win the game, when he has a practical certainty of doing so; whereas the primary object of every player, in any game, whether of luck or skill, ought to be to win the game as quickly as possible. This is undoubtedly sound, as far as it goes; but, in a game which is a question of profit or loss, should it not be quite as much the player's object to win as much as he can, as to get the game over as quickly as possible? It seems to me that the argument refutes itself.

I mentioned earlier that Auction Bridge is not so scientific as ordinary Bridge, and, in my own mind, I am firmly convinced that I am right in saying so, although many of the keen Auction Bridge players entirely refuse to acknowledge it. It is a game of quick perception and of sound judgment—yes; but of scientific play of the cards—no; not in the same category with ordinary Bridge.

The finest points of play which arise at ordinary Bridge are in playing to the score; in declaring to the score when either side are at an advanced stage, such as 24, 26, or 28; and, in a minor degree, in the play of the cards under such conditions, when the whole game

may turn on winning or losing one trick in an unimportant suit. This does not exist at Auction Bridge. To be 26 or 28 up, even in the last game of the rubber, is of no value at all, as you are not in the least likely to be left in to make one trick in clubs or in spades; and even to be 24 up is of very little value, as you may be quite sure that your opponents will not leave you with "One Heart" or "One Diamond," unless their hands are quite valueless, in which case you would still win the game from a much lower point in the score. The scores which really matter are 14 or 18, as "Two Hearts" or "Two Diamonds" will then win you the game, and your opponents may not be able to overcall you, except at great risk of being doubled, and of losing a substantial amount.

At ordinary Bridge every trick in every hand has a pronounced value, and one great secret of the good player's success is that he systematically wins the most possible, or loses the least possible, on every hand—and every trick is of value. On a heart declaration a good player will perhaps win three by cards, scoring 24, while an inferior player will only win two by cards, scoring 16. That extra trick won is of much greater value than the mere 8 points which it seems to represent, as it gives the side which have won it a fine chance of winning the game on their next deal.

At Auction Bridge it would be of no use at all beyond the value of 8 points, which is infinitesimal, and the skilful player derives practically no advantage from his skill in winning that extra trick. One frequently hears a player say, "I could have won another trick, but it does not matter; I could never have won the game." And he is quite right, it does not matter; his bad play will have cost him nothing, and the legitimate advantage of the skilful player is thereby seriously minimised. There are only two things that matter at Auction Bridge: fulfilling the contract, and winning the game. Between these two there is no issue of any value.

If the dealer fulfils his contract, and could never have won the game, one trick more or less, won or lost, is of no consequence at all, except for the few points which it represents; and this is all in favour of the unskilful player and against the skilful one.

Again, in the play of the two hands as dealer, the scientific Bridge player owes a great part of his advantage to his faculty of placing high cards and counting his opponents' hands, with no data to guide him beyond the actual fall of the cards. At Auction Bridge these data are generally supplied to him. When one opponent has called "Two Clubs," and the other has called "Two Diamonds," it does not require the cunning of Mephistopheles to place the high cards in those two suits—anyone,

short of an idiot, can do it as well as the greatest master of the game. So much information as to the hands is bound to be given by the previous declarations, that the subsequent play of the cards is generally very easy.

These are some of the reasons why I contend that Auction Bridge is not nearly so scientific a game as ordinary Bridge. I have no wish to induce the moderate Bridge player to give up ordinary Bridge and to take to Auction—far from it. I should be very sorry to think that Bridge, ordinary scientific Bridge, would ever yield its proud position as the prince of all card games; but I am quite sure that the moderate player has a far better chance of holding his own, against superior skill, at the new game, than he ever had, or ever would be likely to have, at the old one.

So much for the merits of the new game. It also has serious demerits. For one thing, one is terribly in the hands of one's partner, and there is no getting away from it.

The same thing applies, more or less, to all partnership games. Even at ordinary Bridge, one may be let in for very serious, and unlooked for, losses, by a partner who makes rash declarations, or who doubles, not wisely, but fearlessly. At Auction Bridge, the possible losses entailed by an over-speculative partner are fearful to contemplate; and this is the one great blot on the game,

that it is quite impossible to protect oneself against a partner's eccentricities. A rash partner, who will insist on grasping at the declaration, and who habitually declares above the value of his hand, on the principle of "keeping the flag flying," is very dangerous indeed to play with, and is almost certain to land one into serious trouble; and the worst of it is that there is no means of stopping him. Any declaration that one makes oneself only encourages him to further flights, and the wisest policy to pursue, in such a case, is to sit tight, and to get the game over as soon as possible, with as little loss as possible.

Perhaps I had better explain what is meant by "keeping the flag flying." It is a term peculiar to Auction Bridge, invented to meet the special requirements of the game, and it applies to a player who voluntarily incurs an almost certain loss, above the line, with the object of keeping his opponents from scoring below the line, and so winning the game and rubber. He is then said to keep the flag flying, the idea being that, as long as the flag is flying over the fort, all is not lost, but there is still a hope of retrieving a desperate situation.

There is a peculiar feature about Auction Bridge, that it is possible for a player, who is so minded, to prevent his opponents from ever winning the rubber, by always overcalling their

declaration, even with the certain knowledge that he will be defeated on his own call. This is the idea which gave rise to the principle of keeping the flag flying. If a player really determined to push this principle to its furthest point, his opponents would never be able to win the rubber on any declaration short of "Grand Slam in No Trumps," as that is the only declaration which cannot be overcalled; but, in the meantime, he would be piling up terrible losses above the line, until, sooner or later, his opponents would turn round and allow him to win the rubber, when he would find himself a loser of an appalling number of points.

In the early days of Auction Bridge, before the possibilities of the game were clearly understood, some players were rather infatuated with this idea of keeping the flag flying, and carried it to great excess.

There was one memorable rubber, in which two players, each possessed of this idea, cut together as partners, and they carried out their principles so thoroughly that they eventually accomplished their object of winning the rubber, but they lost 1200 points on the transaction; and it is to be hoped that this was a salutary lesson to them.

The bonus of 250 points for winning the rubber is too small a margin to allow of this principle

being carried to any great excess, and quite rightly so. There are occasions when it is undoubtedly sound policy to make a call on which one fully expects to be beaten, with the object of preventing one's opponents winning the game and rubber ; but these occasions are not common, and the principle of keeping the flag flying at all hazards cannot fail to be a ruinous one.

The personal element comes in very strongly at Auction Bridge. There is more advantage in knowing one's partner's peculiarities, and his methods of play, at this game, than at any other that ever was invented. Two moderate players, who have played together a great deal, and who are thoroughly conversant with each other's methods of declaring, will have a great advantage over two much better players, who are playing together for the first time.

Another demerit of Auction Bridge, although a smaller one, is the extreme slowness with which it is so often played. Played quickly, it is a very pretty game ; but, for some unknown reason, many players take such an inordinately long time about making their declarations, that the game is apt to hang fire very much, and to become almost boring. Hesitation in declaring does not give away the same amount of information as it does at

ordinary Bridge (which is, incidentally, another score for the new game), but it does tend to make the game very tedious, and to take away half the pleasure from it.

Some players start with the idea that they can bluff at the game, but they are very soon, and very expensively, undeceived. I said earlier that Auction Bridge has a great element of Poker in it, but it is not the Poker element of bluffing, by declaring above the value of one's hand. Auction Bridge is a game in which a player should declare under the value of his hand, rather than above it. Never be in a hurry to make an expensive declaration. You are certain to have another say. Rather wait and see what your opponents can do, and then overcall them, or double them, if you are in a position to do so with advantage. Above all, try to vary your game as much as possible—that is where the real Poker element comes in, in disguising the strength of your own hands, and in gauging the strength of your opponents' hands. The man who plays a straightforward, stereotyped game, always declaring up to the full value of his hand, will have little chance against the man who varies his game skilfully, who sometimes says nothing and conceals the strength of his hand until the last moment, and at other times pushes

his hand for all that it is worth. His opponents will be able to make nothing out of him, and will not know what he is driving at, whereas the other man's hand will be easy to read. Understanding the opponents' game, and being able to gauge the probable strength on which their declarations have been made, is the first element of success at Auction Bridge. When a player has arrived at that knowledge, and combines with it a thorough appreciation of the principle that it will pay him better, in the long run, to defeat his adversaries than to score himself, he will have little to learn about Auction Bridge, and ought to be able to hold his own in any company.



# CHAPTER I.

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## DESCRIPTION OF THE GAME.

AUCTION BRIDGE is played on the same lines as ordinary Bridge, with one or two important variations. It is played by four players, and the cutting for partners and for the deal, the method of dealing, and the value of the suits, are precisely the same as at ordinary Bridge. The point where Auction Bridge diverges from its parent game is in the declaration, which is not confined to the dealer and his partner, but every player in turn has the right of making a declaration by overcalling any previous declaration which has been made.

Let us start from the beginning. As soon as the deal is completed, the dealer looks at his cards, and is obliged to make a declaration of some kind. He has no option of deputing the call to his partner, as at ordinary Bridge; he is obliged to declare something. A common first call by the dealer is "One Spade," which means that he contracts to win one odd trick, or, in other words, seven out of the thirteen tricks, with spades as trumps, playing his own hand and his partner's combined, as at ordinary Bridge. The player on the dealer's left can then double the spade call, or he can make any declaration of a higher value—that is "One Club," or one diamond, or one

heart, or one "no trump," or he can simply pass the spade declaration, if he does not wish to make any declaration of his own. The dealer's partner can then overcall anything that has been already called, either by the dealer or by the second hand, or he can pass the previous declaration, or double a call made by the second player. If the second player has called "One Club," the third player can call "One Diamond," or anything higher. If the second player has called "One Heart," the third player can call "Two Clubs," as the call of two tricks always beats the call of one trick if the value is the same; thus, a call of "Two Diamonds" is higher than "One No Trump," and "Three Hearts" is higher than "Two No Trumps," the value in each case being the same. If the dealer has called "One Spade," and the second player has passed, the third player should always declare something. If he has any reasonable call which he can make on his own hand, he will naturally make it; but it is usual for him to go rather further than this, and to take his partner out of the spade call if he can do so with reasonable safety. It then devolves upon the fourth player, who can either double the third player's call, or can make any declaration of a higher value, or, if he wishes to do so, can pass. The dealer then comes in again, and he, just like the others, can either overcall, or double, or pass; and so it goes on round until everyone has declared himself satisfied.

Every time that a declaration is made, the other three players have, in their turn, the right to overcall it, no matter how many times the call may have gone round. A player can always overcall his partner, but he cannot double his partner's declaration. When a declaration is doubled by one of the opponents, the game is re-opened, and either the declarer or his partner can overcall the doubled declaration; thus, if a player declares "Two Hearts" and is doubled, either he or his partner can get out of it by declaring "Two No Trumps" or "Three Diamonds." A double only affects the score, and not the value in declaring, so that a call of "Two Diamonds" is higher than "One No Trump" doubled.

When everyone has expressed himself satisfied, the original declarer of the selected trump plays the two hands, his partner's hand being exposed, as Dummy, after the first card is led, and the game then proceeds as at ordinary Bridge. Let us take an example. AB are partners against YZ. A deals and declares "One Spade," Y passes, B declares "One Diamond," Z declares "One Heart." A, the dealer, says "Two Diamonds"; Y goes "Two Hearts"; B, Z, and A all pass. Z then plays the hand; A, the dealer, leads to the first trick; Y's hand is exposed on the table, and YZ have contracted to win two by cards, or eight tricks, with hearts as trumps. It will be noted that, in the above case, Z plays the hand, although his partner, Y, made the final call of "Two Hearts." This is because Z was the

original caller of the heart suit. His partner's call of "Two Hearts" raises the value of the contract from one trick to two, but it does not affect the question of who plays the two hands. The original caller of the suit selected is always the player, notwithstanding the fact that his partner has overcalled him in the same suit; the theory being that the real strength in the suit lies with the original caller, and his partner has only backed him up to show that he can render some assistance.

The value of the suits is exactly the same as at ordinary Bridge, and the amount required to win the game (30 below the line) is also the same; but the method of scoring is very different. The declaring side, provided that they fulfil their contract, score exactly as they would at ordinary Bridge. If they declare hearts, and win four by cards, they score 32 below the line and win the game, whether their contract was one, two, three, or four tricks; but if they fail to get their contract—for instance, if they declare "Three Hearts" and only win two by cards—neither they nor their opponents score anything below the line for that hand, but their opponents score 50 points above the line for every trick under the contract, or if the declaration was doubled, 100 points for every such under-trick. This bonus above the line does not vary according to the value of the declaration. It always remains at 50 points, whatever the declaration may have been, whether it was spades or "no trumps."

Under no circumstances can a side score anything below the line towards the game, when the final declaration is against them. If their opponents declare "One No Trump," and they double and win three by cards, they do not win the game (the score below the line is still virgin on both sides), but they score 300 above the line, as their opponents contracted to win seven tricks, and only won four, which entails a loss of 150 points above the line, or, as the declaration was doubled, a loss of 300 points; the score below the line remaining exactly as it was.

The bonus for winning the rubber is 250 points instead of the 100 points at ordinary Bridge; but this benefice of 250 points is often materially discounted by previous losses above the line, and it is by no means an uncommon occurrence at Auction Bridge for the side which eventually wins the rubber to lose on the transaction.

In making the declaration, it is desirable to express oneself as plainly as possible. Any embroidery, in the shape of inconsequential remarks, should be carefully avoided. On the first round of the call, it is better to declare "One Spade," or "One Heart," or "One No Trump," rather than to say "Spades," or "Hearts," or "No Trumps," so as to prevent any possible misunderstanding. When passing the declaration, the word "Pass" is a bad one to use, as it is so easily mistaken for "Hearts." It is better to say "Content," or "No more," or simply "No," as there cannot possibly

be any misunderstanding about those terms. Also, in doubling a declaration, a player should always particularise the call which he is doubling. For instance, "I double three Hearts," or "I double two No Trumps," is much plainer and better than simply saying "Double," or "I double."

Until last year there were no recognised Laws of Auction Bridge. The Bath Club had its own code, the Portland Club had its own code, and other Clubs, at which the game was regularly played, had their own codes.

This was such a very unsatisfactory state of affairs that something had to be done. Accordingly, early in 1908, a standard Code of Laws was drawn up, and agreed upon, by a Joint Committee of the Portland and Bath Clubs. This code was published, in small book form, by Messrs. De La Rue & Co. Ltd., and was gratefully accepted by the Auction Bridge playing public, as a solution of the difficulty. That appeared to be the end of the matter, but it was not so. No sooner did the Laws appear in print, than certain cavillers arose, and found much fault with them—not with the purport or the working of them (everybody was quite satisfied with that), but with the wording and phraseology.

Thereupon, a fresh Committee was formed to go all over the ground again, and to polish up and revise the work of the first Committee. This has now been done, and it is to be hoped that the Laws are at last definitely settled. A good many

alterations have been made, but they are all verbal ones. The Laws affecting the declaration and the play of the hand remain, in substance, the same as they were before. The full text of them will be found at the beginning of this book.

A notable addition has been made in the form of Laws for Three-handed Auction Bridge. It is rather curious that there should be a desire to return to the original form in which the game was played, but it is so. There are some players who prefer the three-handed form of the game, and who always play it when they get the chance, and therefore it was thought necessary to formulate Laws for them.

Three-handed Auction Bridge can hardly be described as a game of skill. It very soon degenerates into a mere medium for gambling, and it is more to be compared to sitting round a table and tossing for sovereigns, than to playing an intelligent game.

The most important of the Auction Bridge Laws is the limitation of the loss on a declaration of "One Spade" to 100 points, whether doubled or not. This is for the protection of the dealer, who is obliged to make a declaration of some kind, however bad his hand may be. Without such a Law, it was quite possible for the dealer and his partner, supposing that they both held very bad hands, to be let in for a serious loss, which they had no possible means of avoiding. To meet this emergency, they have been given the refuge of the

“One Spade” declaration, limited to a loss of 100 points. If the dealer’s partner chooses, of his own volition, to call “Two Spades,” he does so at his own risk, and he must abide by the consequences of his action if it happens to turn out very badly, as it may do. The safety-valve has been offered to him, and, if he refuses to avail himself of it, he will have nobody but himself to blame should serious loss ensue.

An extra bonus of 50 points, above the line, has been given to a player who fulfils his contract, when he has been doubled. This is designed to check the somewhat indiscriminate doubling which was creeping into the game. Some players, when their opponents had made a declaration which would win the game, were in the habit of doubling, without any justifiable grounds for so doing, on the off chance of something happening.

The penalty for a revoke has been altered, and brought within reasonable limits; and the rest of the Laws are only such as were required to meet the special requirements of the game. The Laws of ordinary Bridge apply to every case for which a special Auction Bridge Law has not been framed.



## CHAPTER II.



### THE DECLARATION.

THE declaration is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, of Auction Bridge. The play of the cards is quite a secondary consideration, compared with the declaration. At ordinary Bridge there are two potent factors towards success—correct and intelligent declaring on the one hand, and skilful play of the cards on the other; and the latter is by far the more valuable of the two. At Auction Bridge the situation is reversed. Skilful play, which enables a player to extract the utmost value from a hand, is undoubtedly of value, but it does not conduce nearly so much to success as intelligent and clever declaring.

There are some hands which are quite simple, and which are played just as at ordinary Bridge; but there are others, the great majority of hands, which turn on the declaration to such an extent that, when the bidding for the declaration is over, the interest of the game, as regards that particular hand, is practically over.

In the early days of Auction Bridge, under the old rules, there were two distinct schools of players—or perhaps I should say of declarers, which really amounts to the same thing. The guiding principle of the one school was to conceal their strength as much as possible, in the hope of inducing their opponents to declare above the value of their hands, when they would pounce down upon them, and double them, and probably score a very substantial sum above the line. The aim and object of the other school was to win the game and the rubber as quickly as possible, with no beating about the bush at all, and these players always declared up to the full value of their hands straight away. It was found that the latter school used to win more rubbers than the former, but the rubbers which they won were invariably small ones; whereas, when the others, the waiting school, won a rubber, it generally assumed proportions which were very pleasing—to themselves, not to their opponents.

The introduction of the new “One Spade” limitation rule brought about a great change in this state of affairs. The two schools still exist, but there is not nearly the marked difference between them which there used to be, and on many points they are agreed. The opening declaration from strength is now universal, or very nearly so, and there is but little of the lying low, and declaring “One Spade” on a strong “no trump” hand, which used at one time to

be such a favourite method of opening the game. There are some players who do it occasionally, but it is now quite the exception, instead of being, as it formerly was, the general practice.

It is not the number of rubbers won, but the value of them, which tends to success at Auction Bridge, and this is all a question of skilful and intelligent declaring. As an instance of what I mean, a Bridge player of great experience, who had, no doubt, played the new game by the light of his preconceived ideas of declaring at the old one, once said to me, "This Auction Bridge seems a very funny game. I have kept a careful account ever since I began to play it, and I find that I am a loser at it, although I have won two games out of every three that I have played. How do you account for that?" I could account for it quite easily, although I did not like to tell him so. He did not understand the very first principle of the game, which is that it frequently pays better to defeat the opponents' call than to score oneself.

The real test of whether a man is a good player at Auction Bridge is not whether he wins or loses at the game—that may be a mere matter of cards. We all know that good cards will beat good play, and that the finest player in the world cannot win against a superfluity of aces and kings. The real test is whether he habitually wins a larger average of points per rubber than he loses, or the reverse. One or two rubbers prove nothing; but if a player

finds that he continues to lose appreciably larger rubbers than he wins, do not let him flatter himself that it is the fault of the cards, or of his partners. Let him rather give up playing Auction Bridge and take to Skittles; he will have a much better chance of winning at that. If, on the contrary, his winning average of points is considerably, and regularly, in excess of his losing average, then let him shake hands with himself, and continue to play the game with the greatest confidence.

Now as regards the giving of information. On this point Auction Bridge differs considerably from its parent game. When a player has strength in one suit, and in one only—and by “strength” I mean winning cards, not numerical strength—it may be of great assistance to his partner to know that that suit is protected, with a view to a “no trump” call. Therefore it is expedient, in such a case, to make a declaration in that suit, simply with the idea of giving the partner information, and thereby helping him to declare “no trumps.”

When a player has a really strong hand, he expects to be the eventual player of the two hands, and therefore his object should be to gather information, not to dispense it. He should not give away unnecessary information, which can be of no possible use to his partner, but which may be of some use to his opponents.

The indiscriminate giving of information on the declaration is a mistake at Auction Bridge. One great element in the game is to realise when to

give information and when to withhold it. Sometimes it is very helpful to make a declaration which will give information to one's partner, but not always. The well-known axiom of Whist and of Bridge, that it is more important to give information to one partner than to withhold the same information from two adversaries, applies equally to the play of the cards at Auction Bridge, but does not invariably hold good as regards the declaration.

A first-class Bridge player, starting to play Auction Bridge, must begin by disabusing his mind of some of his most cherished Bridge maxims, otherwise he will never become a good declarer. The first tenet of his Bridge religion has always been that, when he has a good hand, he should make the game as expensive as possible by declaring at once up to the very fullest value of his hand; but this will not lead him to success at the new game.

The conditions as regards the value attaching to the deal are so entirely different. So far from the deal being an enormous advantage, it becomes rather a disadvantage. At ordinary Bridge, the declaration is confined to the dealing side, and they know that if they do not advance their score materially on their own deal, they will have little chance of doing so on their opponents', and their opponents' deal comes next. They are always haunted by the fear that their opponents may win the game on the next deal, and this

obliges them to declare at once up to the fullest value of their hands. At Auction Bridge there is no anxiety of this kind. Each side will have an equal chance of scoring on the next deal, and therefore the dealer has no immediate cause for hurry.

Some players, especially good Bridge players, altogether refuse to accept the theory that there can be any other road to success, than winning the game and rubber as quickly as they can. They argue, with some show of reason, that the bonus for winning the rubber is 250 points, and that winning or losing this bonus entails a difference of 500 points, which is a very considerable amount, and well worth going for. We grant all that, we others; but we contend that there is another way of looking at the matter. Suppose that a player has won the first game, and that he picks up a strong "no trump" hand, on which he will have to be very unlucky if he does not win three by cards and game. He has declared "Two No Trumps," and one of his opponents calls "Three Hearts." He is well guarded in the heart suit—say, king, ten, and two others—so that his opponents have no earthly chance of winning nine tricks on their heart declaration. What is he to do? The Bridge player, the careful man, the seeker after the nimble ninepence, will call "Three No Trumps," and will win the game and rubber, and will make sure of those 250 points. Not so the experienced Auction Bridge player. He will double the

.....  
"Three Hearts" declaration, and will make a big score above the line.

Let us say that he scores 200 points—he will probably score a great deal more than that, but let us take 200 points as a working hypothesis. What is the position now with regard to those 250 rubber points?

Our friend stands to win 450 extra points if he eventually wins the rubber, and to lose only 50 extra points if he fails to win it; that is to say, the odds are 9 to 1 in his favour, and he still remains with a game in hand. Surely a very desirable position to be in.

The consideration of the mathematical odds, laid or taken, is one which ought to enter largely into the question of the declaration. No doubt, if the game ever becomes really popular, some mathematical genius will work out these odds, and will give the public the benefit of his calculations. All declarations at Auction Bridge really amount to laying odds, greater or less, on performing the contract which one enters into. The difference is that, in making a big declaration, one is laying long odds on oneself—in doubling a declaration made by the opponents, one is taking odds; and my own experience has taught me that, in any form of speculation, it is far more profitable to take odds than to lay them.

To revert for a few moments to the subject of giving information to one's partner. Auction Bridge is essentially a game of aces and kings as

against numerical strength. The information to give a partner, the information which is likely to be of use to him, is that one can command a certain suit—that one holds the ace and king, or at least the king and queen of it; and this is the basis on which all informatory declarations should be made.

In making a forced declaration, it is much better to declare "One Diamond" on ace, king, and one other, than on five diamonds headed by the knave. The most delusive, and the most dangerous partner to play with, is the man who makes a declaration on five small cards, or even on six cards, of a suit, headed by the knave or ten. A case in point occurred to me quite recently. The score was love-all. My partner declared "One Diamond," the next player called "One Heart," I called "One No Trump," the other adversary called "Two Hearts," my partner called "Three Diamonds," and was overcalled with "Three Hearts."

My hand was—

♠	.....	Ace, 10, 6
♥	.....	Queen, Knave, 4
♣	.....	Ace, King, 7, 6, 4
♦	.....	Queen, 3

I naturally doubled "Three Hearts," as I had a practical certainty of four tricks in my own hand, and I could trust my partner—or thought that I could trust him—for at least one trick in diamonds. What do you suppose happened? My partner had called "Three Diamonds" on six to

the knave, with nothing else in his hand at all, and we lost the game and rubber on the hand. I won my four tricks all right, but that was all that we did win; and then my partner blamed me for doubling, and said that he only called "Three Diamonds" on the strength of my call of "One No Trump." My call was quite sound. I had quite a good "no trump" hand with a legitimate diamond call from my partner, but it was not a legitimate diamond call. The real cause of the trouble was my partner not understanding that one rudimentary principle of Auction Bridge—that it is a game of aces and kings, not of numerical strength.

The subject of the declaration is an easy one to generalise upon, but it is a difficult one to write about in detail with any degree of authority, or to lay down hard-and-fast rules for, because no two hands are ever quite the same, and also because the ideas and methods of different players, equally good, differ so very widely. At Auction Bridge there can never be said to be a right or a wrong declaration, as there generally is at ordinary Bridge. Two equally good players will often declare quite differently upon the same hand; and, without judging by results, it is quite impossible to say that one was right or the other wrong.

Not only do the ideas of different players vary very widely, but also the methods of declaring in different circles, and at different clubs, appear to

vary very considerably. This is one great drawback to the game as it exists at present, that the methods of play are not universal, that different coteries of players have their different conventions, and that, consequently, a man who plays for the first time in a fresh set often finds himself hopelessly at sea, and is at a grave disadvantage. It is a game of infinite variety, and different people have widely different ideas as to how it ought to be played.

Some believe in this method of play, and others do not believe in that, and it is quite impossible to discuss all the theories propounded. All that I can do is to outline the methods which I personally consider to be the best, and which I have seen practised, with some success, ever since the first introduction of the game.

The bidding on the first round of the call—the tentative bidding, so to speak—is so different from the real business of the hand, that I shall treat the two separately. I shall first deal with the declaration of each of the four players on the first round, and then with the general declaration, when real business is meant, and when they are working up to the ultimate playing point.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE DEALER.

THE DEALER is in rather an unenviable position, because he is obliged to declare something; he has no option of shifting the responsibility on to his partner's shoulders, as he has at ordinary Bridge. However little he may wish to do so, he is obliged to make some declaration. If he has a bad hand, or a hand on which he does not think it advisable, for the present, to make any valuable declaration, he naturally falls back on the safety declaration of "One Spade." An original declaration of "One Spade" means nothing. It does not indicate strength, or even protection, in the spade suit, and must never be taken as signifying that. It merely means that the dealer does not think it advisable to make any higher declaration, and its significance is exactly the same as the passing of the declaration by the dealer at ordinary Bridge. Instead of saying "I leave it," as he would at ordinary Bridge, he declares "One Spade" at Auction Bridge. The two calls are absolutely identical.

In my earlier book, published in 1908, I strongly advocated an original call of "One Spade" by the dealer when he had a good hand; in fact, I

went even further than that, and said, "The better the dealer's hand, the more it behoves him to lie low, and to open the proceedings with a call of 'One Spade.'"

Not only was this quite sound advice at the time when it was written, but also it was, at that time, the almost universal custom among the best Auction Bridge players of the day. Since then a complete revolution has taken place in the accepted methods of declaring.

This revolution was brought about by two causes. Firstly, by the great value of the "no trump" call becoming more fully recognised and understood. Players learnt by experience that it paid them to declare "no trumps" at Auction Bridge on hands which would be considered quite unjustifiable "no trump" calls at ordinary Bridge. Consequently, when the dealer declared "One Spade" on a "no trump" hand, it frequently happened that one of the opponents called "One No Trump" instead, and all the attacking value of the dealer's hand was gone.

Secondly, the new law, limiting the loss on a declaration of "One Spade" to 100 points, altered the complexion of affairs a great deal. Before the introduction of this law there was a convention that the third player should always give his partner another chance of coming in, after a call of "One Spade," by declaring "Two Spades," if he could not rise to anything better. It is easy to see how the new law affected this convention. Players of

a timorous nature refused to be bound by it, and, when they had a bad hand, preferred to accept the first loss of 100 points, rather than to run the risk of losing a good deal more.

Under these circumstances, it is obvious that it was not wise for the dealer to call "One Spade" on a good hand, as it was quite possible that he might find himself left with it. That is the real reason for the great change which has, undoubtedly, taken place.

The best of all opening declarations for the dealer is "One No Trump," provided that he has the smallest nucleus of a "no trump" hand. He does not require to have even the nucleus of what would be considered a "no trump" hand at ordinary Bridge. Let him dismiss from his mind all his theories of the Robertsonian standard, or of any other standard. There is not, and never could be, any recognised standard for a "no trump" call at Auction Bridge. Such a thing does not exist. If the dealer has a fairly guarded hand, with one ace, he will do no harm by beginning with "One No Trump." He should declare it on a hand which would be an utterly unsound "no trump" call at ordinary Bridge. It means so little. It is a protective measure quite as much as an aggressive one. It at once precludes the opponents from showing one another their strength in spades or clubs, and it forces them to begin with a two-trick declaration in either red suit in which they may hold strength.

The effect of the "no trump" declaration at Auction Bridge is widely different from that at ordinary Bridge. At ordinary Bridge it is the most valuable declaration which can be made, but at the same time it is the most dangerous one. It is easier to win the game at "no trumps" than on any other declaration, but it is also easier to lose the game. At Auction Bridge the "no trump" declaration is still the most valuable one; it is still easier to win the game, or to make a good score, on that declaration than on any other. But, instead of being the most dangerous call, it now becomes the safest one, inasmuch as the declarer is only laying 4 to 1 on winning the odd trick, instead of 25 to 1 with a spade declaration, or  $12\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 with a call of clubs. This apparently obvious fact does not seem to enter into the calculations of many players nearly as much as it ought to do. They cannot divest themselves of the idea, derived from long experience of Bridge, that the "no trump" call is a very fine one when it succeeds, but a very expensive one when it fails.

At Auction Bridge the possible loss entailed by failure at "no trumps" is precisely the same as the possible loss entailed by failure at spades—not one point more, either above or below the line.

That is the point which I wish to impress most strongly upon the minds of my readers—to impress so strongly that they will never lose sight of it. It is the main turning-point of the whole game:

that, whereas the possible gain varies with the value of the declaration, the possible loss remains absolutely stationary, and the two are out of all proportion.

The "no trump" call has so many advantages. Not only is it the most valuable—not only is it the one on which the declarer is laying the smallest odds—not only does it offer to the player the best chance of combining the strength of the two hands under his control—not only does it preclude the opponents from showing their strength in the black suits, and force them up to a two-trick declaration in the red suits—but it has yet another great advantage, one which does not pertain to it at ordinary Bridge: it prevents the opponents from declaring "no trumps," and thus cuts away the ground from under their feet. It is quite a common occurrence for two opponents to both hold perfectly justifiable "no trump" hands, and, naturally, the one who can first declare "no trumps" has a very great advantage.

Every Bridge player of any experience will be able to recall to his memory certain "no trump" hands—probably scores of them—which have been carried through with success; and then one of the opponents will have said, "I thought it was quite impossible that they could win the game on that hand. I had a 'no trump' hand myself." When this occurs at ordinary Bridge there is no help for the non-dealers. They can only sit and suffer. At Auction Bridge, on the contrary, the declaration

is not confined to one side; anybody can make a call in his proper turn, and the player who declares "no trumps" first will nearly always have the best of the argument.

Over and over again it happens at Auction Bridge that a player is waiting till his turn comes round in order to declare "no trumps," but his opponent declares it in front of him. What is he to do? Certainly he can double the "no trump" call, but this is a proceeding fraught with some danger, and also there is the chance of the declarer branching to two tricks in a red suit, which may be worse. Again, he can overcall it with "Two No Trumps," if he is strong enough, but to do this requires a very powerful hand indeed. Far more often it will happen that the holder of the better "no trump" hand has no alternative left to him but to sit quiet, and to act purely on the defensive. Very likely, if he has a really good hand, he will be able to defeat the call, and he may score 50, or even 100, points above the line; but this is but a poor compensation for being debarred from playing a good "no trump" hand, with a fair chance of winning the game.

The "no trump" call is the very essence of Auction Bridge, and it has an increased value when made originally, by the dealer, before any of the other players have had the opportunity of declaring anything. A "no trump" call may mean so much, or so little. It may be a really strong call, or it may be an exceedingly weak one. It does not

instil the same terror into the hearts of the opponents as it does at ordinary Bridge, but it is one which they will not be inclined to take any liberties with; and, above all, it is a declaration which is very rarely doubled. Do not forget that. It is a very important consideration.

If either of the opponents has a strong red suit, he will, of course, declare that. But, in order to overcall "One No Trump," he will have to begin with "Two Hearts," or "Two Diamonds," and he may not be quite strong enough to do this without any indication from his partner. It is quite possible that considerable strength in one of the red suits may be divided between the two opposing hands, and that, if one of them had been able to call "One Heart," or "One Diamond," the other one could have backed him up with two, or even three, tricks in that suit, over a subsequent "no trump" call. But the wind will rather have been taken out of their sails by the "no trump" call having come first, as they will not have been able to give one another the desired information, and the dealer is very likely to be left in with his declaration of "One No Trump," on which he cannot come to much harm, even if he does no great good.

There is yet another great advantage in the "no trump" call by the dealer, and that is that the fourth player will not have been able to show his partner which suit to open. Perhaps he may hold five or six clubs, headed by ace, king, and if that suit was opened at first he would

win four or five tricks in it; but, as he has had no opportunity of showing his strength, his partner will be quite in the dark, and can only open his own best suit, which may be a very moderate one. An original "no trump" call shuts out black suit declarations altogether, and only leaves the two red suits open to the opponents.

Failing a possible "no trump" call, if the dealer has a good red suit, such as he would consider a strong declaration as dealer at ordinary Bridge, he should open the bidding with a call of one trick in that suit. He should go even further than that, and should declare a red suit on less strength than he would at ordinary Bridge, provided that he has high cards at the head of it.

Therein lies the difference between the two games. Auction Bridge is a game of aces and kings, not of numerical strength. Ace, king, and two others of either hearts or diamonds, is quite a good opening call for the dealer; but such a suit as six to the ten is a very bad opening call, and one that is only likely to lead to disaster.

When the dealer makes a suit declaration at ordinary Bridge, he does so with one object—to ensure that suit being trumps. When he makes a suit declaration at Auction Bridge, he should have two objects in view—either to play the hand with the trump suit which he has selected, or to help his partner to give the hand a greater value by declaring "no trumps." It therefore follows that the information to give a partner, the

information which is likely to be of use to him, is that one can command a certain suit—that one holds high cards in it; not that one has numerical strength, which will be of no use with a “no trump” declaration, unless the high cards of it are in the partner’s own hand.

When the dealer has a really strong red suit, one on which he will be quite prepared to declare two, or even three, tricks if he is pushed to it, his best policy is to declare “Two Hearts,” or “Two Diamonds,” as an opening call; not to begin with “One Heart,” or “One Diamond,” and to wait to be overcalled.

The value of this original call is not yet fully recognised, and it is by no means a common call, but it is certain to come into more general use with increased experience. It has just the same merits as the original call of “One No Trump.” It prevents the opponents from giving one another any information about their hands. It shuts out black suit declarations altogether, and also (which is a much greater merit) it puts an effectual stop to the tentative “One No Trump” call.

There is all the difference in the world between a doubtful call of “One No Trump” and a risky call of “Two No Trumps.” “One No Trump” is frequently called on the flimsiest of pretexts, merely as a means of bidding the opponents up and seeing what they can do. It is not likely to be doubled; and, as we said before, it can do little harm even if it does no great good. “Two No

Trumps" is quite a different matter. To declare "Two No Trumps" on a doubtful hand, with a strong suit declared against you, is a very dangerous proceeding. The "Two No Trumps" call is very likely to be doubled, and serious loss may ensue. For this reason alone, apart from other considerations, the original call of two tricks in a red suit is an extremely useful one—simply because it deprives the opponents of that most useful form of attack, the "One No Trump" call.

Card players, like the world in general, are apt to fly from one extreme to the other. At one time no one ever opened the bidding with a red suit call. It was not considered good play to do so. Now, under the altered conditions, the boot is rather on the other leg, and some players are in the habit of making original red suit declarations on quite inadequate strength. Their theory is that they like to show their partner what they have got, without any unnecessary delay. This theory is quite sound provided that they have real strength in the declared suit—provided that they can really command that suit; but I strongly disapprove of an original red suit declaration on such strength as five to the knave, or five to the queen. It may prove useful once in a while, but far more often it will lead to trouble. The danger does not lie in the original call being doubled, or defeated; it lies in the wrong information vouchsafed to the partner. He will at once credit the declarer with the command of the declared suit, and he will regulate his

own declaration on that assumption. When he finds that he has been deceived, not only will there probably be some present loss, but his future confidence in his partner's declarations will be severely shaken; and confidence between partners is of supreme importance at Auction Bridge.

When the dealer has high cards in a red suit, such as ace and king, or king and queen, or even queen, knave, ten to six, he should declare one trick in that suit as an opening call; but never let him declare a red suit on mere numerical strength, unassisted by high cards. Numerical strength is an important factor in backing up a partner's call, but as an original declaration it does not possess anything like the same value at Auction Bridge as it does at ordinary Bridge.

A very useful original call by the dealer, and one quite peculiar to Auction Bridge, is "Two Spades," when he has a really strong holding in the spade suit, with high cards at the head of it. There is a double object in this declaration—firstly, to invite his partner to declare "no trumps"; and secondly, to show his partner which suit to lead, in the case of "no trumps" being declared by the second player. To justify this "Two Spades" declaration it is essential to hold the command of the suit. The ace and king, or at the very least the king and queen, at the head of the suit is a necessity.

Remember that it is a direct invitation to your partner to declare "no trumps," and that he will

inevitably do so on the smallest pretensions; therefore it behoves you to be specially careful not to mislead him. If you call "Two Spades" because you have great numerical strength in spades, such as queen to six or seven, and your partner declares "no trumps" on the strength of your call, he will have very good cause for making unpleasant remarks to you if things go wrong. As I said before, Auction Bridge is, from beginning to end, a game of aces and kings, as against numerical strength. An original call of "Two Spades" should never be made unless the spade suit can be established with the loss, at the very outside, of one trick. I have known a player begin with a call of "Three Spades," holding ace, king, queen, knave and three others; and a very sound call it was.

There is a certain school of players who have a convention among themselves that an original call of "Two Spades" does not necessarily imply strength in the spade suit, but that it is made as a general invitation to the partner to declare "no trumps" if he is strong enough, and as an indication that the dealer can offer considerable support. I can see no sort of sense in this convention. If the dealer's hand is such that he thinks a "no trump" call desirable, why not call it himself? An original "no trump" call by the dealer, now-a-days, means very little. It merely means that he has an average hand, or possibly a hand a little above the average. It does not imply any great strength. If he is going to wait, with a fair all-round hand,

for his partner to declare "no trumps," it is quite likely that the second player will do so instead, and then all the sting is gone out of his hand. The time for the dealer to declare "Two Spades" is when he has pronounced strength in the spade suit, and very little else of value.

The club declaration by the dealer is a rock on which many players come to grief. They will persist in beginning with "One Club" because they are weaker still in the spade suit. There can be no greater mistake. The declaration of "One Spade" is merely a negative one. It only means that the dealer passes—that he does not wish to declare anything. It does not mean that he has any strength, or even any protection, in the spade suit. On the other hand, a declaration of "One Club" means, or ought to mean, very nearly the same as a declaration of "Two Spades." It ought to mean that the dealer can at any rate safeguard, even if he cannot command, the club suit. When the dealer opens the bidding with a declaration of "One Club," he practically says to his partner, "I can take care of the clubs, so you need not be afraid of that suit in declaring 'no trumps.'" It does not amount quite to the same invitation to declare "no trumps" as the call of "Two Spades" does, but it comes very near it. It shows that the club suit is at any rate well protected. If the dealer has entire command of the club suit, he will call "Two Clubs," but this amounts to the same thing as calling "Three Spades."

The call of "Two Clubs" must not be confounded with the call of "Two Spades." In order to show strength in the spade suit, it is necessary to call "Two Spades," because a call of "One Spade" means nothing; but a call of "One Club" does mean something. It means, or should mean, considerable strength in the club suit; and it is not necessary for the dealer to call "Two Clubs" in order to show that he can take care of that suit. A call of "One Club" is quite sufficient. I am not in favour of an original call of "Two Clubs" by the dealer, unless he has overwhelming strength in the suit, because it forces his partner up to two tricks in either hearts or diamonds in order to overcall him. Certainly, it forces the opponents up also, but the object of Auction Bridge is to make an aggressive call, and "Two Clubs" is not an aggressive call. No one is anxious to be left in to play a hand at "Two Clubs," laying  $12\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 on himself; and it is quite possible that, if the dealer's partner cannot take him out, the opponents may also refuse to do so, and may leave him with his "Two Clubs" call, on which he can win nothing of value, but may lose a great deal. The call of "One Club" would have served the purpose equally well, and would not have been attended by the same danger.

To sum up the whole matter—the best of all opening calls for the dealer is, unquestionably, "One No Trump." This call is such a valuable one that it should be made on the lightest possible justification, but it must have some sort of justification.

Much as I believe in the efficacy of the original "no trump" call, I do not believe in using it as a bluff, nor in making it almost blindfold, as is the manner of some. A player who follows those lines will very soon succeed in destroying every atom of confidence that his partner ever had in him, and then will come confusion and disjointed interests.

An original "no trump" call should mean at least an average hand—that is, one ace, one king, one queen, one knave, etc., or their equivalents. If the dealer has greater strength than that, so much the better; but that is about the minimum on which a "no trump" call by the dealer is advisable, or justifiable. Even then it is considerably weaker than what is considered a justifiable call at ordinary Bridge. To declare "no trumps" on less strength than that is rather to invite trouble. A call of "One No Trump" is not often doubled, but it is doubled sometimes, and then, unless the dealer's partner can take him out, there is likely to be serious trouble.

Declare "no trumps" as dealer whenever you can reasonably do so, but do not overdo it. Do not depart from all reason, and make a call which you have no possible chance of carrying through with success. You may have no intention of going beyond "One No Trump," whatever happens, but your partner will not know that, and he is quite likely to call "Two No Trumps" if he is guarded in the suit which is declared by the adversaries.

As regards red suit declarations—the dealer should declare “One Heart,” or “One Diamond,” if he has five, or even four, of the suit, with two good honours at the head of it. Ace, king to four, or king, queen to five, is a sound and useful one-trick declaration; but queen and four small ones, or anything of that kind, is a bad and deceptive declaration, and should be religiously avoided by the dealer. When the dealer has a really strong red suit, such as ace, king, knave to six, or king, queen, and four or five others, his best policy is to begin with “Two Hearts” or “Two Diamonds” straight away, so as to make it as difficult as possible for his opponents to overcall him.

Let me say here that a good red suit declaration is at all times a far better opening than a doubtful “no trump” call. If the “no trump” call is a sound one, it is preferable to even a good red suit call, because you can afterwards branch to the red suit call if you wish to; but, if the “no trump” call is a weak one, you should always declare the red suit in preference to it—at any rate to begin with.

“Two Spades” is a favourite call by the dealer, and often a very valuable one. It is a direct invitation to the partner to declare “no trumps,” and it is also useful as having a somewhat deterrent effect upon the opponents, as regards their declaring “no trumps.”

The declaration of “Two Spades” should never be made without pronounced strength in the spade

suit; and by "pronounced strength," I mean sufficient high cards to command the suit. Winning cards of other suits—say, good clubs as well as good spades—may influence the dealer in inviting his partner to call "no trumps"; but an essential point about the call of "Two Spades" is that the spade suit itself should be well taken care of.

A call of "One Club" ought to mean almost as much as a call of "Two Spades." A call of "Two Clubs" should only be made when the dealer holds the entire command of the club suit. "One Club" is quite sufficient to show strength in clubs; there is no necessity for the dealer to call "Two Clubs," although it is frequently done.

Neither is there any necessity for the dealer to declare clubs at all, under any circumstances, unless he is very strong in the club suit. It will not be of the least assistance to his partner to know that his clubs are stronger than his spades, when both are weak. When the dealer is strong, or well protected, in clubs, the call of "One Club" is an extremely useful one. Holding ace, king, and one other club, or king, queen and two others, or king, knave to five, or any sort of protection of that kind, the dealer should declare "One Club" instead of "One Spade," if he cannot rise to anything better. What I want to emphasise is that it is ridiculous to call "One Club" on a weak hand, because the spades are weaker still. The call of "One Spade" has no reference whatever to strength or weakness in the spade suit

When the dealer declares "One Spade," it merely means that he elects to pass the declaration for the time being. It is tantamount to saying "I pass." It does not imply any strength in the spade suit, nor does it necessarily follow that he has a useless hand. It only means that he does not think it advisable to open the proceedings with an attacking declaration; and as such, and as such only, must it be read.

The dealer, more than any other player, ought to vary his methods of declaring as much as possible. Any stereotyped methods of opening the game is a mistake. There is no player easier to defeat than the one whose opening call of "One Spade" always means weakness, and whose opening call of "One No Trump" always means strength. The adversaries know at once what sort of hand is opposed to them, and can regulate their game accordingly.

The dealer should never declare above the value of his hand, except with a "no trump" call; but it will pay him well to occasionally declare below it. A clever player recently held the following hand as dealer:—

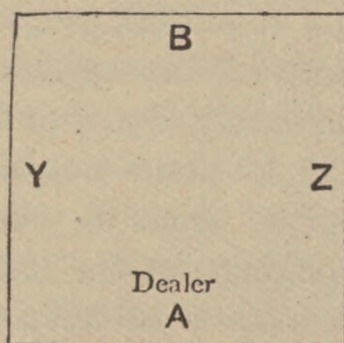
♠	.....	7, 4
♥	.....	(None)
♣	.....	8, 3
♦	.....	A, K, Q, 9, 7, 6, 5, 4, 2

Nine players out of ten would have opened with "Two Diamonds." Not so our friend. He

declared "One Spade." The second player called "Two Clubs," the third player "Two Hearts," and the fourth "Two No Trumps." There was a chance. The dealer doubled the "Two No Trumps," and made his nine diamonds, winning 400 points above the line. The cards were rather curiously divided:—

♠ 10, 9, 8, 2  
♥ K, Qn, 10, 7, 6, 3  
♣ Knaive, 6, 5  
♦ (None)

♠ 3  
♥ Knave, 8, 5, 4  
♣ A, K, Q, 10, 9, 4  
♦ 8, 3



♠ A, K, Q, K<sub>v</sub>, 6, 5  
♥ Ace, 9, 2.  
♣ 7, 2  
♦ Knave, 10

♠ 7, 4  
♥ (None)  
♣ 8, 3  
♦ A, K, Q, 9, 7, 6, 5, 4, 2

If the dealer had begun with "Two Diamonds," his partner would probably have called "Two Hearts," and he would then have had to call "Three Diamonds," which he would just have got. He would have scored 18, and 24 for honours, instead of 400, less 30 for aces. When the hand was over, one of the opponents, possibly somewhat annoyed at the turn which affairs had taken, said,

“That is all very well. It came off that time, but suppose you had been left with your ‘One Spade’ call. What a fool you would have looked !” One can make allowances for a little natural irritation, but not for such ignorance of the game as that remark evinced. There were thirteen hearts to be divided among the other three hands, and four honours in each black suit. How was it possible that the call would be left at “One Spade” ? This was an occasion on which it was absolutely safe to adopt a waiting policy.

The practice of concealing one’s strength in order to try to score off the opponents is now out of fashion. It is rarely done under the present conditions, but it is done occasionally, and it succeeds more often than it used to, because players are not looking out for it now-a-days. It is quite a useful weapon to keep in reserve, and the results of it are sometimes very pleasing, as the above hand tends to prove.



## CHAPTER IV.

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### THE SECOND PLAYER.

I HAVE already said, in the last chapter, that a complete revolution in the methods of declaring at Auction Bridge has been caused by the limitation of the loss on the "One Spade" declaration. This applies solely to the first round of the call, and it applies more strongly to the second player than to anybody else. The new law has altered the aspect of the game so entirely, from the point of view of the second player, that I have been constrained to re-write this chapter altogether, and to write it on quite different lines.

While the dealer's liability, on his opening call of "One Spade," was unlimited, it was not only undesirable, but also very bad play, for the second player to help him out of his enforced responsibility by making a higher call. In my earlier book I laid great stress on that point. I advocated, as strongly as I possibly could, the advisability of leaving the dealer in with his black suit call, whereby he was laying long odds on himself, until it was proved that either he or his partner could get out of it. That was good sound advice under the conditions obtaining at that time.

Now, under the new conditions, the situation is entirely altered. If the dealer and his partner should both have bad hands, they will simply avail themselves of the refuge offered to them, and will accept the loss of 100 points above the line, which, although it is not a thing to be desired, is by no means fatal.

This refuge offered to the dealer must necessarily alter the tactics of the second player. If the dealer and his partner have bad hands, it follows that the second player and his partner must have correspondingly good ones; and therefore their policy is not to lie low and to score a maximum of 100 points, but rather to strike out for themselves, and to try to win the game, or at any rate to make a good score.

The declaration by the second player must depend a great deal upon what the dealer has said. A declaration of "One Spade" by the dealer is, to a certain extent, a confession of weakness. It does not necessarily mean that he has a hopeless, or even a very bad, hand; but it does mean that he has not got a possible "no trump" call, nor a strong red suit, nor great strength in either spades or clubs. The second player has then something to go upon. He knows something about the dealer's hand, although that something is of a negative nature; but negative knowledge is better than none at all.

The value of the "no trump" call comes in again here. Again "One No Trump" is the best

of all calls which can be made, provided that there is any reasonable justification for it. The second player is even in a better position than the dealer to declare "One No Trump" on a guarded hand, because he knows that one at least of the two hands against him is not a powerful one. He should declare "One No Trump" on the faintest semblance of what he would consider a sound "no trump" hand at ordinary Bridge, and then wait for further developments. If the third player overcalls him with two tricks in a red suit, he can retire from the contest. He will at least have achieved something, by forcing the third player up to a two-trick call.

If the second player has a sound call in a red suit, he should declare that in preference to a doubtful "no trump." Exactly the same arguments, with respect to a red suit call, apply in the case of the second player as in the case of the dealer. If he has high cards in the declared suit, it is always a sound call; but, just as in the case of the dealer, a call on numerical strength, without high cards at the head of the suit, cannot be anything but a dangerous and misleading one.

There are certain players who, at ordinary Bridge, cannot bear to pass the declaration with five hearts in their hand, whatever may be the value of them. This class of player is dangerous enough as a partner at ordinary Bridge, but he is far more dangerous at Auction Bridge. You can never depend upon his declaration, and dependence upon

a partner is half the battle. He will jump in gaily, and declare "One Heart" on five to the knave, and then, when you have loyally backed him up, you find that his declaration was utterly unjustifiable. What are you to do next time? It is not the first loss which matters so much. It is the fact that all your confidence in him will be gone, and that, next time, you will be inclined to sit tight, and to trust only to the cards in your own hand.

To return to the tactics of the second player. When the dealer has opened with "One Spade," if the second player is strong in the spade suit, but not strong enough to declare "no trumps," he should double the "One Spade" call. This again, like the declaration of "Two Spades" by the dealer, is an invitation to the partner to declare "no trumps." It says, quite plainly, "I can take care of the spade suit, so do not be afraid of that." Once more let me say, at the risk of seeming to repeat myself, that a leading declaration of this kind should never be made on numerical strength alone. It is absolutely necessary that the suit should be commanded—that there should be high cards at the head of it in the doubler's hand. The number held is quite immaterial, provided that the suit can be stopped two or three times. The object of the second player, in doubling a declaration of "One Spade" by the dealer, is not to enhance the value of each trick on the spade declaration. Nobody supposes that the hand is going to be played at "One Spade" doubled. The object is to inform

his partner that he commands the spade suit, with a view to a "no trump" declaration; and, at the same time, to show his partner which suit to lead, in case the third player should declare "no trumps."

Some players, especially beginners at the game, declare "Two Spades" over an original call of "One Spade," instead of doubling the original call. This is a mistake. The object is the same, and the result is also the same, if the partner happens to have a good hand. But suppose that he has a bad hand, what is going to happen then? The liability on a call of "One Spade" is limited, but the liability on a call of "Two Spades" is unlimited. It is quite possible that the opponents may leave the second player with his call of "Two Spades," and why should he voluntarily put himself into a position of some danger, when it can be so easily avoided? The double of the "One Spade" call would have served his purpose equally well, and would have left the liability, although a smaller one, with his opponents instead of with himself. If it should happen that the second player is very strong indeed in spades—say that he holds ace, king, queen to six or seven—his best plan is to declare "Three Spades," even without another possible trick in his hand. This leaves no sort of doubt about the situation; he is clearly marked with the entire command of the spade suit. Certainly his hand is not worth nine tricks, but that is not the object of the call. The object is to give

valuable information to his partner, and it is a declaration which he is very unlikely to be left with, and on which he is still more unlikely to be doubled.

A call of "One Club" by the dealer should also be doubled by the second player, if he can command the club suit, provided, of course, that he is not in a position to make a more valuable declaration. The original club declaration is one that is very imperfectly understood, and it is frequently made on quite inadequate strength. It ought to mean that the dealer can take good care of the club suit, but it does not always mean as much as that. This call is often made, by irresponsible players, because they are very weak in spades. Suppose that the second player holds ace, queen, and two other clubs, or ace, knave, ten, and another: he should always double an original call of "One Club," in order to show his partner that he need not be afraid of that suit. Not only may this double be very useful to the fourth player, but it will also tend to handicap the third player. He may have been prepared to declare "One No Trump," after his partner's opening call of "One Club," but the double of the "One Club" call will pull him up short, and will very likely induce him to alter his tactics. Any information, of any kind, which the second player can give his partner is well worth giving, and that is what he should go for, rather than for making an attacking declaration himself, unless he has a really good hand.

When the dealer opens with a call of "Two Spades," the second player must say something if he possibly can. It is now of supreme importance for him to show his partner his best suit, as a "no trump" call by the third player is more than likely, in which case his partner will have to make the opening lead. If he has a good red suit, he should declare two tricks in it, not one trick, so as to shut out the "One No Trump" call by the third player. This call of "One No Trump" is such a strong weapon in the bidding at Auction Bridge that it must always be guarded against as much as possible. A player will declare "One No Trump" on very moderate strength, as a purely tentative measure, but he will not declare "Two No Trumps" to start with, without assured strength in his hand.

It is of great importance, in making any declaration, to consider how the opponents are likely to reply to it. If the obvious and likely reply is "One No Trump," then a declaration which shuts out the call of "One No Trump" has a greatly increased value.

When the dealer has called "Two Spades," a call of "Two Clubs" by the second player is a very useful one. It does not shut out the "One No Trump" call by the third player, but it takes a great deal of the sting out of the dealer's call of "Two Spades," and the third player will not be likely to declare "no trumps" unless he is himself guarded in the club suit.

When the second player has a moderately good red suit—not perhaps a suit on which he would make an original attacking declaration, but one which it is important to have opened at once against a “no trump” declaration—he should declare one trick in that suit over a call of “Two Spades” by the dealer. This call does not show any great strength. It is merely an indication given to the partner as to which suit to open, and it will be taken as meaning that, and only that, by an intelligent partner. If the second player passes the call of “Two Spades” by the dealer, he knows that a call of “One No Trump” by the third player is imminent, and therefore it behoves him to make an effort. If he is not in a position to prevent the “One No Trump” call, he ought to stretch a point in order to show his partner which suit to open.

When the dealer has opened with a call of one trick in a red suit, the second player should overcall him if he can do so with safety, but he should run no risks. If he is guarded in the declared suit, and has moderate strength in other suits, he should declare “One No Trump;” but it is dangerous to do this on anything short of a very strong hand, without a guard in the declared suit. The danger does not lie so much in the chance of his “One No Trump” call being doubled—although that danger does exist—as in the chance of his partner backing him up by calling “Two No

Trumps" over a subsequent declaration of two tricks in the declared suit; and then there is likely to be serious trouble.

When the second player calls "One No Trump" over a suit declaration, his partner is quite justified in crediting him with a guard in the declared suit, and this fact should always be borne in mind. There is no more fruitful cause of disaster at Auction Bridge than this. "One Heart" says the dealer. "One No Trump" says the second player gaily, with no sort of protection in the heart suit. He does it solely with the object of pushing his opponents up to "Two Hearts," but his partner cannot be expected to guess that; so, having a fairly good hand himself outside hearts, he goes "Two No Trumps," and they get doubled, and lose 300 or 400 points, and then each blames the other for what was entirely the second player's fault. I do not say that the second player should never call "One No Trump" over a suit declaration without protection in the suit declared. If he has a really good "no trump" hand outside the declared suit, he should certainly do so. The danger of his partner backing him up disappears altogether under those conditions, and the call is quite a sound one. The practice which I do disapprove of, is for the second player to declare "One No Trump" on a very moderate hand, as a sort of bluff, simply with the object of raising the dealer's call, and without any protection in the suit which the dealer has declared,

When the dealer has declared "One Heart" or "One Diamond," the call of "Two Clubs" is a very useful one for the second player. It has the effect of forcing his opponents up to two tricks in their declaration, it indicates strength in the club suit to his partner, and it is very unlikely to be doubled or to come to much harm.

When the dealer begins with "One Diamond," the second player should always overcall him with "One Heart," if he has a justifiable heart call—that is to say, a call which he would have made originally as dealer.

This is obviously quite sound; but it is very unsound, and very bad play, for the second player to make a weak call of "One Heart" simply with the object of putting his opponents up to "Two Diamonds." Here, again, the danger does not lie in the "One Heart" call, but in the probability of the fourth player supporting it by declaring "Two Hearts," or even "Three Hearts," or perhaps calling "Two No Trumps," trusting his partner for the heart suit. There is nothing terrible about a call of "One Diamond" or "One Heart."

Supposing the score to be love-all, it is not probable that the opponents will win the game on their red suit call; and moreover, if there is any chance of their winning the game, you may be quite sure that they will not hesitate to go up to two or three tricks, and nothing will have been gained by raising their call.

When the opponents are already 24 up, so that one trick in a red suit will win them the game, there is some sense in the second player stretching a point in order to overbid an original call of "One Heart" or "One Diamond"; but with the score at love-all, the second player should pass a call of one trick in a red suit, unless he can overcall it to a manifest advantage.

We now come to the call of "One No Trump" by the dealer. This is not only a very common call, but also a very important one. I have already said that this is a call which should be made, and which is constantly made, by the dealer on quite inadequate grounds from the Bridge player's point of view. The second player should bear this fact in mind, and must never be frightened by an original call of "One No Trump"; but, at the same time, it behoves him to treat it with some respect. It may mean little, or it may mean much. It may be merely a tentative call, but, at any rate it means that the dealer has a hand of some value—that, at least, is a certainty. A knowledge of the dealer's method of declaring is a strong factor in estimating the significance of an original "no trump" call. Some players declare "One No Trump," as dealer, almost blindfold, other players are much more conservative; consequently, knowing to which school the dealer belongs will be of great assistance to the second player in dealing with the "no trump" declaration.

It sometimes happens that the second player has a good "no trump" hand himself, and he is in a great quandary what to do when the dealer takes the bread out of his mouth by declaring "One No Trump" in front of him. There are three courses open to him. He can overcall it with "Two No Trumps," or he can double, or he can simply pass, and hope to score something above the line, being quite assured that his opponents will not win the game. To declare "Two No Trumps" over an adverse call of "One No Trump" is an extreme measure. It is sometimes done, but it rarely pans out well. If the third player has anything like a useful hand, he will inevitably double, and then the second player's strong position turns into a very precarious one. This call is only justifiable when it is of supreme importance to win the game, and even then it is doubtful whether the double is not the better policy. Any hand which admits of a call of "Two No Trumps" must of necessity be a doubling hand against a declaration of "One No Trump"; but doubling is attended by one danger. The opponents may get out of their difficulty by branching to two tricks in a red suit. If the second player is also prepared to double a declaration of two tricks in either red suit, he should unhesitatingly double "One No Trump," as in that case, if his opponents branch, they will be jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire; but this will very rarely happen.

The best course of all for the second player is to declare "Two Hearts," or "Two Diamonds," if he can possibly do so. Then, if either of his opponents should call "Two No Trumps," he has them in a cleft stick, and can double to the greatest advantage. Failing these conditions, if he cannot declare two tricks in a red suit himself, and is not sure to defeat a similar call by his adversaries, he had far better sit tight, and leave the dealer to struggle with his "no trump" call as best he can.

When the dealer has declared "One No Trump," and the second player has great strength in clubs—say ace, king, queen to six or more—never let him be tempted to call "Three Clubs." To do so is simply to give away the whole show. There is no possible chance of the opponents declaring "Two No Trumps" with the whole club suit marked against them. They will either branch to a red suit, or leave the second player in with his "Three Clubs," on which he can win nothing of any value, even if he gets his contract, which is by no means certain. This is a mistake which has been frequently made, and it is a bad mistake. Neither should the second player dream of doubling "One No Trump," however many winning clubs he may hold. He should simply pass, and pray that the declaration may be left at "One No Trump."

If the second player has a really strong red suit, such as ace, king, queen to five, or ace, king, or king, queen to six, he should always call two tricks

in that suit over a declaration of "One No Trump." But he should remember that he, and not his partner, will have the first lead, and that, therefore, there is no object in indicating his suit to his partner. The only reason for this declaration is, or ought to be, a desire to play the hand with the declared suit as trumps. I strongly disapprove of the common practice of declaring "Two Hearts," or "Two Diamonds," on a moderate hand, with the sole object of putting the opponents up to "Two No Trumps." It is simply giving them an option to nothing. If they are strong enough to call "Two No Trumps," they will do so, and will probably get it; or they may elect to double the weak red suit call, in which case there is likely to be serious trouble.

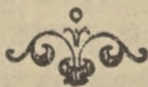
There seems to be a very prevalent idea that it is the duty of the second player to raise the dealer's call, if he can possibly do so; but this idea is an entirely erroneous one. The ambition to bid the dealer up to two tricks in whatever declaration he may have made is certainly a laudable ambition, provided that there is any chance of defeating such declaration when it has been bidden up. That is the point which so many players miss—whether there is any chance of defeating the higher call. If the second player can see that chance, or any possibility of it, then let him run a considerable amount of risk in his endeavour to force the dealer up. He has then something definite to go for. On the other hand, what sense can there be in

making a risky call, in order to force the dealer up, when there is no possible chance of defeating him after he has been forced up? As I said before, it only amounts to giving the dealer an option to nothing, and this can never be anything but very bad play.

The second player, if only he would recognise the fact, is really in a fine position. The dealer is obliged to make a declaration of some kind, but there is no such obligation upon the second player. He can simply pass the opening call, if he wishes to do so, and wait for further developments; and this should be his policy in the majority of cases. If he can overbid the dealer with any sound call, he will naturally do so, but it is only foolhardiness to make a thoroughly unsound call with the sole object of overbidding the dealer's declaration, especially when that declaration is "One No Trump." I know that it is constantly done, and done by men who are supposed to be good players, but it is not a paying game for all that. The risk is too great, and the gain is too small. Such players will overcall a declaration of "One No Trump" on queen, ten to five hearts, or on five diamonds headed by ace, knave. What can be gained by it? There is no object in showing the suit to their partner, as they will have the first lead themselves. If the dealer has a good hand, he goes "Two No Trumps," and gets it; if not, he leaves the second player in with his "Two Hearts," or his "Two Diamonds"; and what chance can there be of

winning eight tricks on such a hand, with a "no trump" call against it?

A desire to take part in the conversation may be, and undoubtedly is, a most amiable trait in a person's character. It is highly to be commended in general society, at the dinner table, in a lady's drawing-room, at a Suffragette meeting, or possibly in the present House of Commons; but—IT IS NOT A REASON FOR MAKING A DECLARATION AT AUCTION BRIDGE.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE THIRD PLAYER.

By the time that the declaration reaches the third player, the game will have begun to develop itself. The dealer and the second player will each have said their say, so that the third player will have some material to work upon. He will not be so much in the dark as either of the other two, but will be certain to have been able to derive some information, either positive or negative, from the previous declarations which have been made.

Let us begin with his partner's declaration. An opening call of "One Spade" by the dealer is, under the present conditions, to a certain extent a confession of weakness. As the game is played at the present time, there is but little of the lying low with a good hand which used to obtain in the early days of Auction Bridge.

Fashions have altered at Auction Bridge, as in most other things. The fashion now-a-days is for the dealer to make any attacking call of which his hand is capable, without any preliminary finessing.

Consequently, when the dealer declares "One Spade," his partner reads him at once with no attacking call in his hand; and, further than that,

with no pronounced strength in either black suit, otherwise he would have called "Two Spades," or "One Club." It does not follow that he has a very bad hand; it simply means that he does not consider his hand strong enough to open up the game with a valuable call. He may have quite a useful assisting hand, although it is not an attacking one.

The significance of the "One Spade" call varies enormously with different players. Some players will always declare "One Spade" on a hand with which others would not hesitate to declare "One No Trump." In this respect, as in most others at Auction Bridge, a knowledge of a partner's idiosyncrasies is of great value.

When the dealer has declared "One Spade," and the second player has passed, the third player should make any higher call which his hand admits of; but he should not spread himself too much, as he knows that his partner's hand is, at best, a moderate one. A call of "One No Trump," if his hand justifies it at all, is the best way out of his difficulty; but for this call he ought to have something approaching a genuine "no trump" hand.

It is dangerous for the third player, when his partner has called "One Spade," to make a very sketchy "no trump" declaration, as this will be doubled much more readily than an original "no trump" call by the dealer, and it may lead to serious loss. Good and valuable as the "no trump" call is, it may be carried to excess.

If the third player has a bad or a moderate hand, on which he can make no sound call, he should pass the "One Spade" call, and accept the almost certain loss of 100 points if his opponents elect to leave it at "One Spade." As a matter of fact, they very rarely do so. When the call of "One Spade" comes round to the fourth player, he nearly always declares "One No Trump," in the hope of winning the game. The third player should bear this in mind—namely, that a "no trump" declaration is looming over him; and, if he is able to give his partner any indication as to which suit to lead against the "no trump" call, he ought to do so—say, by calling "One Club" or "Two Spades."

The old theory, or convention, no longer exists whereby it was incumbent upon the third player, having a bad hand, to take his partner out of a call of "One Spade" by calling "Two Spades." This convention is numbered with other relics of the past. A call of "Two Spades" now means that the third player is strong in spades himself, and is not afraid of being left with the spade call. There is not the smallest obligation on the third player to take his partner out of his original call unless he thinks it advisable to do so.

Even when the "One Spade" call is doubled by the second player, the position remains the same. There is no more obligation on the third player to relieve his partner of the double, but rather less, as the dealer will now have the oppor-

tunity of coming in again, and of making a further declaration himself, if he wishes to. The doubling of the spade declaration does not increase the liability; it still remains at a maximum of 100 points, and it is that fact which has caused such a revolution in the accepted methods of declaring.

A declaration by the dealer of "Two Spades," or "Two Clubs," and, to a lesser extent, a declaration of "One Club," amounts to a direct invitation to the third player to declare "no trumps," and it should always be regarded as meaning that.

It does not mean that the third player should declare a wild "no trump," simply on what he hopes to find in his partner's hand. If that were all that was required, the dealer could make the declaration himself.

An original declaration of "Two Spades" means that the third player is entitled to add at least two tricks in the spade suit to the value of his own hand; and if his hand, with that addition, would warrant a "no trump" call, he ought to declare "One No Trump." As an example of what I mean, suppose that the dealer has opened with a call of "Two Spades," the second player has passed, and the third player holds—

♠	.....	7, 5
♥	.....	King, 10, 9, 4
♣	.....	Ace, Knave, 8, 3
♦	.....	8, 7, 5

This cannot be described as a sound "no trump" call, even at Auction Bridge; but if you add the ace

and king of spades to it, or rather substitute the ace and king for the seven and five, it at once becomes quite a strong call. That is what the call of "Two Spades" really amounts to.

I am told that, at certain places where Auction Bridge is played, the call of "Two Spades" does not necessarily imply strength in the spade suit, but is made as a general invitation to the third player to declare "no trumps." If there is an established convention to this effect, known and agreed to by all the players at the table, all well and good. Different sets of players can, of course, arrange among themselves any conventions that they please, provided that everyone knows about them; but they cannot apply them with success outside their own circle. Such a convention as this must necessarily be an arbitrary one. It could never be evolved from rational methods of play, as it does not bear looking into. If the dealer has such a good all-round hand that he wishes for a "no trump" declaration, why should he not declare it himself? The accepted meaning of the original call of "Two Spades," apart from any special conventions, is that the dealer has pronounced strength in the spade suit, and very little strength outside it.

The most important phase in the tactics of the third player arises when his partner, the dealer, has declared "One No Trump," and the second player has passed. It by no means follows that the third player should also pass, and leave his partner in.

If he has a hand which will render general assistance to the "no trump" call, he will, naturally, leave it at that. It will often happen, however, that he has considerable strength in one of the red suits, and very little else of value. In this case, it is somewhat difficult for him to decide which is his best policy, whether to overcall his partner with "Two Hearts," or "Two Diamonds," or to leave it at "One No Trump." If his red suit is a really strong one, there can be no doubt about it—he should not hesitate to overcall his partner.

He must never be influenced by any fancied reluctance to take the call away from his partner; there is no greater fallacy. It does not amount to taking the call away from his partner, and it must by no means be construed as doing so. He is simply giving his partner information, and he says, in plain Auction Bridge language, "I have a good suit in hearts, or in diamonds (as the case may be), and very little else; so, unless your 'no trump' is quite a sound one, you had better leave the matter in my hands." An intelligent partner will grasp the situation at once, and will act as he thinks best. If he calls "Two No Trumps," the third player must abide by that decision, and say no more; and the winning of the game ought to be nearly a certainty.

If, on the contrary, the dealer's "no trump" call was a light one, he will probably be only too pleased to accept the alternative which has been offered to him, and again the result ought to be a useful score.

That is all quite plain and easy when the third player's suit is a strong one ; but sometimes his suit will be a very moderate one, and that is when the difficulty comes in. Let us suppose that the dealer has declared "One No Trump," the second player has passed, and the third player holds such a hand as :—

♠	.....	8, 7, 2
♥	.....	Queen, Knave, 8, 6, 2
♣	.....	Knave, 9, 4
♦	.....	10, 5

What is he to do with this hand? It is a desperately weak hand on which to declare "Two Hearts," but it is still worse as an assistance to a "no trump" call. Unless the dealer has a really good hand the "no trump" call is certain to be defeated. Therefore, as it is always wise to choose the lesser of two evils, the third player should declare "Two Hearts" on the above hand ; not with any hope of making a good score, but as the best chance of escaping loss. If the dealer has a sound "no trump" call, well guarded in the other suits, he will declare "Two No Trumps," and will perhaps be glad to know that the heart suit is taken care of by his partner.

It should be clearly understood that a declaration of "Two Hearts," or of "Two Diamonds," over a partner's call of "One No Trump," is not an indication of strength, but is rather an indication of great weakness outside the declared suit. It says, in plain and unmistakable language, "My hand

will be of no use to you, except in the one suit which I have declared." If the partner then elects to call "Two No Trumps," he does so with his eyes open, and he cannot say afterwards that he was given false information, if things should happen to go wrong.

This question of the third player overcalling his partner—and it is one of the most important questions in the whole of Auction Bridge—really turns on the value attaching to the original call by the dealer. If the original "no trump" call was always a sound one, if it could be thoroughly depended upon, there would rarely be any need for the third player to interfere with it; but it is sometimes a very unsound one. The "no trump" call by the dealer is such an extremely valuable one (as was explained in Chapter III.), that it is frequently made on very insufficient material. Some players even carry the principle to a ridiculous point, and declare "One No Trump," as dealer, almost blindfold. Consequently, with this uncertainty attaching to the call, the third player should always make an alternative declaration in a red suit, if he is in a position to do so, unless his hand will render general assistance to the "no trump" call. He need not be guarded in every suit—that is too much to expect—but, unless he has good assistance in one other suit, or better still in two, his best policy is to declare two tricks in either red suit in which he has moderate strength—such as five with two honours, or six with one honour—rather than

to leave his partner in with an uncertain "no trump" call.

The same principle applies when the dealer has made an original suit declaration. If the third player can offer no assistance in the declared suit, but has a possible "no trump" hand with that suit taken care of, he should overcall his partner with "One No Trump." It is quite open to the dealer to overcall this again with two tricks in his own suit; and, if he does so, the third player should abide by his partner's decision, unless he has a very strong hand indeed of his own. The dealer has doubtless got some good reason for preferring the less valuable declaration. It will either be because his own suit is a very strong one, or because his hand will be of little use with a "no trump" declaration.

No harm can possibly result from this overcalling. The third player simply offers his partner the alternative, and it remains with his partner to accept it or to ignore it.

Again, when the dealer makes an original diamond declaration, the third hand should overcall it, if he has a very strong hand in hearts, as the heart declaration is worth more than the diamond. If the dealer overcalls again, the third player should retire and give his partner credit for knowing what he is about. He has said his say, and if his partner elects to take the matter into his own hands, he probably has a very good reason for doing so. In quite the early days of Auction Bridge, some

players used rather to resent being overcalled by their partner; but this idea is long since exploded, and overcalling a partner is now recognised as forming a part of the intelligent conversation of the game.

When the dealer has opened with a suit declaration, other than spades, and the second player has overcalled him in another suit, the third player should always back his partner up, if he can support him at all. It is not necessary for him to have strength in the declared suit, provided that he has a fairly good hand outside that. Three probable tricks is quite a good enough hand to support a partner on, and many players do it on considerably less strength than that.

Being void of a suit, or holding only a singleton in it, with two or three little trumps in the hand, is a great element of strength in this connection, particularly if the short suit happens to be the one which the opponents have declared.

Suppose the dealer has called "One Heart," and the second player has overcalled him with "Two Diamonds," and let us give the third player what is really an extremely bad hand. Say that he holds—

♠	.....	Ace, 10, 8, 5, 4
♥	.....	6, 5, 2
♣	.....	9, 8, 6, 5, 3
♦	.....	(None)

No one will call this a good hand, or even a moderate one, or anything but a very bad one;

and yet the third player, holding this hand, should certainly back his partner up by overcalling the "Two Diamonds" call with "Two Hearts."

The hand is worth at least three tricks, with hearts as trumps—two by ruffing diamonds, and one for the ace of spades; whereas, with diamonds as trumps, it cannot be worth more than one trick.

An original suit declaration is not the same unknown quantity as the original "no trump" call. An original declaration of "One Heart," or "One Diamond," made by a reliable player, can be depended upon to mean substantial strength in the declared suit; and it may be very useful to the declarer to know that his partner can assist him, even to the extent of only two or three tricks. I say that an original suit declaration can always be depended upon; and so it can be, when it is made by a reliable player.

There are, however, certain players who cheerfully declare "One Heart" or "One Diamond" on five to the queen, or five to the knave, just as they will declare "hearts" or "diamonds" on the same sort of hands at ordinary Bridge. These are not reliable players, and it would only be a waste of time to write about their methods. No reliance can be placed upon their declarations at all. When one is unfortunate enough to cut with a player of this type, the only thing to do is to sit tight, and to declare only up to the value of one's own hand.

When the dealer has declared "One Heart," and the second player has overcalled him with

"Two Diamonds," the third player's holding in the diamond suit should influence his play a great deal. If he is well protected in the diamond suit—not strong enough to double, but so strong that there is a fair chance of the "Two Diamonds" call being defeated, and no chance of the game being won on it—his better policy will be to leave it at "Two Diamonds" rather than to make anything like a doubtful call of "Two Hearts." If, on the other hand, he is very weak in diamonds, he ought to run a certain amount of risk, rather than to leave his opponents with their "Two Diamonds" call.

When the second player has made a red suit declaration, the third player ought, of course, to raise him if he can do so with safety. Further than that, if the third player has a useful hand, with which there would be a good chance of defeating a higher call in the declared suit, he ought to stretch a point in his endeavour to bid his opponents up; but there can be no sort of logic in making a risky call in order to raise the opponents, when there is no reasonable chance of defeating them after they have been raised. It is only giving them an option to nothing.

There remains the question of a "no trump" declaration by the dealer having been overcalled by the second player with two tricks in a red suit. The third player should bear in mind the fact that an original "no trump" call under present conditions may mean much, or it may mean very

little, and he should treat this call with a considerable amount of caution. Unless he has a "no trump" hand himself, he should never declare "Two No Trumps" if he is not guarded in the suit declared by the opponents. For him to do so in such a case is to say to his partner, "I am guarded in the declared suit, so you need not be afraid of that." If he has more than mere protection in the declared suit; if he holds considerable strength in it, such as four or five with two honours, he should not support his partner by calling "Two No Trumps," but should go for a bolder and a better game. He is then in a fine position to double the second player's two-trick suit declaration, and he should not hesitate to do so. The dealer can still declare "Two No Trumps," and will do so if he can see a certainty of winning the game, with the declared suit held safe by his partner. If not, the declarer of "Two Hearts" or "Two Diamonds" can have but a very poor chance of winning eight out of the thirteen tricks with a "no trump" hand on one side of him, and strength in his declared suit on the other side. Some players are very fond of bidding up a declaration of "One No Trump," and they occasionally do so on very slender pretexts; but it is a dangerous game to play. The third player should always be on the look-out for this opportunity, as it is one which constantly occurs, but which is very frequently missed. Provided that he can take care of the declared suit

by winning two tricks in it, he can trust to his partner to do the rest; and his opponents are likely to have a very bad time. It is the same principle over again, that it is more valuable to defeat one's adversaries than to score oneself. The declared suit is probably the weak spot in the dealer's "no trump" declaration; and with that weak spot filled up by his partner's hand, the "no trump" call ought to do very well. The Bridge player—the man who always tries to win the game—will declare "Two No Trumps" as third player, and will be quite likely to achieve his object; but the experienced Auction Bridge player will take a different view. He will double the "Two Hearts" or "Two Diamonds" declaration, with the certainty of annexing 200 or 300 points, provided that his partner's "no trump" declaration was at all a justifiable one. That is Auction Bridge, as distinguished from ordinary Bridge.



## CHAPTER VI.

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### THE FOURTH PLAYER.

THE fourth player hardly requires a chapter to himself. So much will have happened before it comes to his turn to speak, that his tactics should really come under the heading of the "General Declaration," which is treated of in the next chapter. Still, there are one or two points which are peculiar to the position of fourth player; so he shall have his own chapter, but it will be a short one.

As regards overbidding the opponents, everything that has been said on the subject, for the guidance of the second and third players, applies equally to the fourth player. He should overbid a call made by either adversary when he can do so with safety, and with possible profit; but it is very unsound play to make a risky declaration with the sole object of bidding the other side up, when there is no chance of defeating them after they are bidden up.

It is much better for the fourth player to overcall a declaration made by the dealer than one made by the third player, because, when the dealer is the declarer, there is a distinct object in showing his partner which suit to lead. When the third player is the declarer, the fourth player will have to make the opening lead himself, and there is no object in showing his suit.

In these days of forward declarations, it does not often happen that a call of "One Spade" or "Two Spades" comes round to the fourth player, but it does happen sometimes. When the dealer has called "One Spade," and the second and third players have both passed, it is more than probable that the fourth player will have an exceptionally good hand. Someone must have the strength, and if none of the other three have been able to declare anything, who can have it but the fourth player? If he has a really good hand, he will naturally declare "no trumps," or a strong red suit, with a view to winning the game. That is plain and easy enough; but it will sometimes happen that his hand, although good, does not look like winning the game. What is he to do then?

Many players, when the call of "One Spade" comes round to them, as fourth in hand, seem to think it incumbent upon them to declare something, whatever their hand may be. I fail to see the incumbency, unless there is a good chance of winning the game. The fourth player, under these conditions, is in such a splendid position. The utmost that he can lose is four or six points, which is of no value at all; whereas, on the other hand, he is extremely likely to win 50 or 100 points, by leaving his opponents in with their call of "One Spade." In other words, he is taking 25 to 1 about what must be, as nearly as possible, an even money chance; and surely this is a position which should not be lightly given up.

If the fourth player can make any declaration on which there is a good chance of winning the game, by all means let him make it; but he should never interfere with a call of "One Spade" by making a declaration on which he is extremely unlikely to win the game, although he may, perhaps, win the odd trick. I look on it as sheer idiocy to declare "no trumps" on a moderate hand, because the other players have passed, in preference to accepting the odds of 25 to 1 about the spade declaration.

The situation is quite clear. The cards are evidently very evenly divided, and it will be a near thing which side wins the odd trick.

I have a vivid recollection of my partner once declaring "One No Trump" under these very conditions, and losing two by cards, which cost us 100 points above the line. Then he said, "I am sorry, partner, but I thought, as nobody had declared anything, that I would have a dash for the game." Can there be any sense in that? A man declares "no trumps" on a very moderate hand, knowing that his partner has nothing of much value, and then calls it "having a dash for the game."

It is certainly "having a dash," but I fail to see where the chance of winning the game comes in. A distinct feature of Auction Bridge is recognising when you are in a good position, or in a dangerous one, and regulating your play accordingly.

There are some players who still follow the old convention of taking their partner out of the "One

Spade" declaration by calling "Two Spades." This call generally means, now-a-days, that the third player has strength in the spade suit; but that strength may not amount to much, and the call of "Two Spades" does not always mean even that. If the fourth player has a good hand, he should not be in a hurry to jump in with a strong declaration. He can well afford to wait. He must not forget that his opponents have stepped out of the safety zone by declaring "Two Spades," and that their liability is now unlimited.

His best policy is to double the "Two Spades" call, and to wait for developments. If the opponents are able to get out of it, the fourth player can then make any higher declaration which he may wish to make; but it is quite possible that they may not be able to get out of it, in which case they will be in a very unpleasant and dangerous position.

With a very strong "no trump" hand, it may be sound policy to declare it at once, and to go straight for the game; but, personally, I much prefer to double the "Two Spades" call, and to see what will happen. If the opponents branch to another suit, you can then declare your "no trumps," and you will be in just as good a position as if you had declared it at first.

When "One Diamond" or "One Heart" has been called by the third player, the fourth player should declare "One No Trump," if he has the smallest nucleus of a "no trump" hand, not be-

cause he wishes to play the hand as a "no trump," but in order to force his opponents up to "Two Diamonds" or "Two Hearts," which must of necessity be more difficult to get than one. In calling "One No Trump," it is not even necessary that he should be guarded in the suit declared; but if his opponents amend their call to two tricks in the suit, then he must draw in his horns, and not dream of declaring "Two No Trumps," as the declared suit is certain to be led up to him at once, and he may very easily get defeated.

If the third player declares "no trumps," the fourth player should call "Two Hearts" or "Two Diamonds," if he has a really good suit of either; but it is a risky business to do this without the requisite strength, with the sole object of putting the opponents up to "Two No Trumps." They may refuse to be drawn, and, instead of increasing their own call, they may retaliate by doubling his, when he will be fairly hoist with his own petard, as he will have no possible means of escape. A declaration of one trick is rarely doubled, but a declaration of two tricks is quite another matter, and is apt to be doubled very readily.

Also, the fourth player has nothing to gain by making a risky declaration. If the third player's "no trump" is a good one, he calls "Two No Trumps," and gets it; if it was a weak call, he leaves the fourth player with his "Two Diamonds" or "Two Hearts," and the risky declaration will

probably come unstitched. With the "no trump" declaration made on his right, the fourth player will have to open the game himself, and there is no advantage in indicating his suit to his partner. When the "no trump" declaration has been made on his left, by the dealer, it is quite a different matter. It may then be of the greatest importance to show his partner which suit to open, and he should risk a great deal more, in the way of making a rather chanceable two-trick call, when the "no trump" declaration has been made by the dealer, than when it has been made by the third player; the object being, not only to raise the call to "Two No Trumps," but also to inform his partner which suit to lead.

It does not often happen that the fourth player is in a position to overcall a declaration of his partner's; but, when it does happen, the same argument holds good, as in the case of the third hand overcalling the dealer. Here is a case which recently occurred:—

The dealer declared "One No Trump," the second player called "Two Diamonds," the third hand passed, and the fourth player, holding ace, queen, ten to six hearts, overcalled his partner's declaration with "Two Hearts"; and he was quite right in doing so, as his hearts were, in all probability, better than his partner's diamonds; and also the heart declaration is a more valuable one, and therefore a better one, than the diamond. The sequel of this hand was almost tragic. The dealer

held entire command of both black suits, the king of hearts alone, and three diamonds to the knave. He was already one game to the bad, and the heart declaration looked like being fatal to him; so he hardened his heart, very injudiciously, and declared "Two No Trumps." The second player doubled, and proceeded to win six tricks in diamonds; he then led a heart, of which he had four small ones. The Dummy had knave and one other, and the fourth player made all his six hearts; so that the dealer only won one trick, and lost 700 points above the line, which is the biggest score that I ever saw or heard of.

When the dealer has opened with "One No Trump," the second player has declared "Two Hearts," and the third player has called "Two No Trumps," it can hardly ever be right for the fourth player, however strong he may be in the heart suit, to support his partner by a call of "Three Hearts." It may be very tempting for him to do so if he has five hearts in his own hand; but just think what a declaration of "Three Hearts" means. It means that the declarer can only afford to lose four out of the thirteen tricks, and he takes on this proposition after one of his opponents has told him that he is guarded in the heart suit (that is to say, that he can win one trick in it), and the other opponent has told him that he has a "no trump" hand. The dealer has very likely not got a heart at all, but in that case he will be proportionately strong in the other suits; and

where are the nine tricks to come from? Nothing except a cross ruff could possibly do it.

A moment's thought will disclose the futility of a call of this kind, and yet it is one that is often made. "I was bound to support you in your call," says the player. But why was he bound to support his partner? The second player probably only made the call of "Two Hearts" to put his opponents up to "Two No Trumps," and he succeeded in his object. The last thing that he wished for was to have the responsibility thrust upon him of playing a call of "Three Hearts" against two "no trump" hands. This is quite a fair instance of the sort of irresponsible calls which are often made at Auction Bridge, without the situation being thought out at all.

The only advice to be given to the fourth player is to be very chary of helping his opponents out of a black suit declaration. When the game is advanced beyond the black suit stage, before the call comes round to him, his tactics come under the head of the "General Declaration," which is treated of in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE GENERAL DECLARATION.

By the "general declaration" is meant the bidding after the real business of the hand has commenced, when the preliminary skirmishing is over, and when one of the players, no matter which, has made a declaration of scoring value. Sometimes the dealer will open the proceedings with a call of "no trumps," or of one trick in a red suit. In that case there is no preliminary skirmishing at all; the business of the hand commences right away. At other times the dealer will begin with "One Spade," and possibly the second player will pass; then the onus of opening up the game devolves upon the third player. It very rarely happens, now-a-days, that the call is left at "One Spade." The average player is now inclined to run to the other extreme, and to make calls, for the sake of saying something, which are not sound ones—which he has little or no chance of carrying through with success. There is a happy medium between the two. Experience has proved that the player who habitually waits to see what the others are going to do, before making a declaration, frequently gets left behind, and finds

himself defeated by the more forward declarer. On the other hand, the player who makes a practice of declaring above the value of his hand is asking for trouble, and is apt to prove a very expensive partner to play with.

It has now become an established principle of Auction Bridge that, if a player is able to make any valuable declaration, he should do so at once, both in order to give his partner information, and also, in racing parlance, so as to get the first run. This applies specially to the "no trump" declaration. If a player, wherever he may be placed—whether he is first, second, third, or fourth player—has a possible "no trump" call, he should always declare "One No Trump" at once. If he does not do so, it is more than probable that one of his opponents will call it instead, and the first declarer of "no trumps" has an enormous advantage at Auction Bridge.

The "no trump" call is a tremendously powerful weapon in the hands of the Auction Bridge player—far too powerful. Personally, I consider that the game would be a far better one if the "no trump" call were eliminated altogether—if the bidding was confined to trump suit declarations; but I fear that such a radical change as this is not likely to come about. The "no trump" call will always exist, but its tendency is bound to be to spoil the game, when it has become a sort of race as to which side can declare "no trumps" first—and it is fast coming to that.

The "no trump" call may well be described as the pivot of Auction Bridge. The whole game turns on it. It is such a powerful factor in the game, that it becomes the goal which the experienced player has ever in view. If he is not strong enough to declare it himself, he tries to give his partner such information as may enable him to declare it—as, for instance, by calling "Two Spades," or "Two Clubs," or by declaring "One Heart" on ace, king, and two small ones. He does not declare "One Heart" on such strength as that because he wishes to play the hand with hearts as trumps; he declares it in order to help his partner to call "One No Trump." On the same principle, he is very quick to make use of any information which his partner may be able to give him, to work it in with any strength which he may hold himself, and, if possible, to make up a "no trump" call between the two hands. That is the point which the first-class Auction Bridge player is always working up to—the "no trump" declaration.

It should be remembered that the bidding at Auction Bridge is not governed by the same principles as the declaration at ordinary Bridge. At ordinary Bridge the dealer can either make a declaration on his own hand, or he can leave it to his partner. There the matter ends. There is no intermediate course — no combination of the two hands as far as the declaration is concerned. At Auction Bridge the object of the bidding is

to arrive at the most valuable declaration which the two hands combined are capable of. Therefore, a player should try to give his partner as much information as possible when his own hand is not strong enough for an independent attacking declaration. For the dealer to give his partner any information as to his hand is a crime at ordinary Bridge—at Auction Bridge it is a virtue.

As a general rule for a first call, any declaration which would be a sound one for the dealer to make at ordinary Bridge, is a sound one for any player to make at Auction Bridge. The only difference is that high cards, such as aces and kings, have a greatly increased value at Auction Bridge, and numerical strength has a greatly reduced value. Six hearts, of any value; are supposed to justify an original heart declaration at ordinary Bridge; but no Auction Bridge player of any experience would dream of calling "One Heart" on six to the ten, or on any purely numerical strength such as that. On the other hand, ace, king, and two other hearts is quite a sound "One Heart" call at Auction Bridge; but that would not be looked on with favour as a heart declaration at the other game.

To hark back for a moment to the "no trump" declaration. Here, again, the conditions are very different in the two games. At ordinary Bridge it is generally regarded as rather a rash proceeding to declare "no trumps" with pronounced weakness in the red suits. On a passed declaration this is

certainly the case. At Auction Bridge the position is reversed. There is very little danger in chancing a whole red suit, or even both the red suits; but there is great danger in chancing the black ones.

The reason of this is obvious. If either of the opponents is very strong in hearts or diamonds, he will overcall "One No Trump" with "Two Hearts," or "Two Diamonds"; but he will not call "Six Spades," or "Three Clubs," however strong he may be in a black suit. A beginner might be tempted to call "Three Clubs" if he held seven or eight with the tierce major, but the more experienced player would leave the "One No Trump" call severely alone, and would inevitably defeat it. It is worth bearing in mind that, against a "no trump" call, a black suit is much more likely to be opened than a red one. Some players believe strongly in this black suit theory, and make a practice of always opening spades up to a "no trump" call, unless they are really strong in some other suit, or unless their partner has shown strength elsewhere. There is something in it, but for my own part I prefer the regular Bridge opening of the numerically strongest suit, although it is only fair to say that, if I have any doubt between a red and a black suit, I invariably choose the black one to open.

We now come to the question of how far a player should support his partner's original declaration. There is a tremendous difference between a forced call and a voluntary call; but many

players (I could almost say the majority of players) fail altogether to discriminate between the two, and they treat the one call exactly as they treat the other. When a player has made a voluntary call of "One Heart"—that is, when he could equally well have passed, if he had wished to—it is quite safe to credit him with a genuine heart hand; and his partner should certainly support him by calling "Two Hearts," when the declaration is overcalled, provided that he can render useful assistance, such as one honour in hearts, and two or three tricks in the other suits. With two certain, or three probable tricks, the partner of the declarer should always support a voluntary call of one trick in a red suit; but it is very dangerous to do this on a forced call.

When a declaration, which was obviously a forced one, has been overcalled, the partner of the declarer, unless he is very strong, ought to pass the first time, and see whether the declarer wishes to go on. If he does so, and is again overcalled, his partner can then step in with great advantage, as he knows then that the original declaration was a genuine one. It is undoubtedly of great advantage at times, and when done with discretion, for a player to support his partner; but the principle is carried to very great excess. When a player makes an independent, voluntary suit call, he presumably does so because he wishes that suit to be trumps; but when he overcalls a declaration made by his opponents, he may be actuated by very different

motives. He may be simply nursing them—trying to bid them up to a point at which he can double them; and then, when he has accomplished his object, his partner dashes in and spoils the whole entertainment by making a high call which is probably very difficult to carry through with success.

When playing with an irresponsible partner, who thinks it necessary to support one to the fullest limit of his cards, one's hands are terribly tied. One is afraid to make anything in the shape of a forcing declaration, for fear that one's partner will put his spoke in at the wrong moment, and will turn a fine winning position into one of great danger. Players of this type, and there are many of them—forward players, as they are pleased to term themselves—do not at all realise what they lose by their forwardness. It is not only what they lose on their own declarations; that is bad enough in all conscience, but that is not the worst. They paralyse a good partner to such an extent that he is terrified to play his own game, and he simply tries to get the rubber over as soon as possible, with as small a loss as he can.

The player who never knows when to hold his tongue, is a very difficult partner to play with. It is impossible to play an intelligent game with him, as he will inevitably jump in at the wrong moment, and upset one's best-laid plans. With such a partner it is unwise to make any declaration which will not stand being raised to two or three tricks, and this necessarily cramps one's game terribly.

To return to the subject of forced declarations. These are three in number :—

- I. When the third player is anxious to get his partner out of a spade call.
- II. When a player overcalls a declaration made by the other side.
- III. When the opponents are well advanced in the score, and have made a declaration which will win them the game—as, for instance, when they are 24 up, and have declared “One Diamond” or “One Heart.”

In the last case it is quite right to bluff a little, and to make almost any reasonable call which will force them up to “Two Diamonds” or “Two Hearts,” and prevent their winning the game very cheaply; but the call must always be regarded as a forced one, and a dangerous one for a partner to back up on moderate strength.

In any of the above-mentioned cases, the partner of the declarer ought to recognise the fact that the declaration is possibly a forced one, and he should be very chary of supporting it when it has been overcalled. The overcall is probably just what the declarer wished for—to be offered a means of escape from his forced declaration; and the last thing which he desires is to have his call raised by his partner.

Let us suppose that the dealer has opened the bidding with a call of one trick in a red suit. The second player then has to speak, and he should overcall the dealer if he can possibly do

so, either with "One Heart" or "Two Clubs," over a diamond call, or by calling "One No Trump," or "Two Clubs," or "Two Diamonds," over a heart call. If the second player passes, the third player will probably pass, and then it is the fourth player's turn. If he also passes, the call is left at "One Heart" or "One Diamond," and the game proceeds.

It is sometimes advisable, as I mentioned in a previous chapter, for a player to overcall his own partner's declaration, when he can give little or no assistance to that declaration.

Suppose that a player declares "One Diamond," the next player passes, and the declarer's partner has only one or two small diamonds, but a strong suit of hearts—in that case he ought not to leave his partner in with the diamond call, in which he can render very little assistance; but he ought to declare his own, presumably better, suit of hearts. It is not necessarily taking the call away from his partner, as it is still open to him to call two tricks in diamonds if he is strong enough; it simply amounts to saying, "I cannot help you in your diamond suit, but I have a good call in hearts"; and it then remains for the diamond declarer to do what he thinks best.

/ This overcalling one's own partner often surprises onlookers who do not understand the game, and sometimes affords them an opportunity for a little cheap wit; but it is quite good play for all that, and it is an integral part of the conversation

of the game for those who understand and appreciate it.

Let us follow such a conversation, and try to interpret it. A declares "One Heart," Y passes, B (A's partner) declares "One No Trump." This means "I cannot help you much in the heart suit, but I have a 'no trump' hand, if you can take care of the hearts." Z passes, and A declares "Two Hearts," which says to his partner, "My heart call is a strong one, but I have very little outside; so unless your 'no trump' call is a really good one, you had better leave it to me." B then declares "Two No Trumps." This, being interpreted, means "Thank you very much, but my 'no trump' is a very good one, now that I know that you have got the hearts, and therefore we had better make the most that we can out of the hand."

In this case the opponents have not made a single call, but the others have overcalled one another no less than three times. Overcalling one's partner always seems, to the uninitiated, to be an act of supererogation, but it is not so. It is a part, and a very important part, of intelligent declaring, and it is read and understood like an open book, by those who fully enter into the spirit of the game. It is quite a common occurrence for an inexperienced player, when his partner has overcalled him, to dry up at once, and to say afterwards, in a tone of deep reproach, "Why did you take the declaration away from me? We should have done much better on my call." That

is where he makes the mistake. His partner did not take the call away from him; he only told him that he could not assist in the suit declared, and that there was an alternative declaration if it was wanted.)

( It was still open to the original declarer to make a higher call, and he ought to have done so, if he was really strong. The object is to extract the utmost value from the hand, provided that there is no chance of defeating the adversaries, and, just as at ordinary Bridge, to make the most valuable declaration which the two hands combined are capable of. There is no obligation whatever to leave one's partner in with his call, when one has a more valuable declaration which can be made with a reasonable chance of success; and it is stupid to resent the declaration being taken away by a responsible partner, who knows his business. Combination is the great element of success; and two partners who understand one another's game, and play into one another's hand, will inevitably defeat two others, however good they may be individually, who are not in sympathy, and who have no confidence in one another's judgment.)

The variations of the declaration are so innumerable, and differ so very widely from one hand to another, that it is quite impossible to set them all out in detail. All that I can venture to do is to outline a general scheme for the guidance of the beginner, and to advise him to watch the methods employed by good players for many rubbers before

he attempts to play the game himself for any considerable stake. The most important point that he has to learn is, when to push a hand to its utmost value, and when to keep quiet and to accept any loss that the Fates may have in store for him, without running useless risks by declaring above the value of his hand.

There will be times when he ought to declare above the value of his hand, and there will be times when he ought to declare below it. Experience alone will teach him to discriminate between the two. When a player has a really good hand, he should not always declare the full value of it at once if he can help it. If he does, he will probably be left with his call, and, although he may win the game, he may also be throwing away a magnificent chance of getting a valuable score above the line; and let it be always borne in mind that this is where the profit of Auction Bridge comes in—in scoring above the line, not below it. All the big games which are won at Auction Bridge owe their magnitude to failures by the opponents, not to successes by the winners. Take the most extreme case. Suppose that a player wins a rubber in two hands, with two Grand Slams, the utmost that he can win is about 500 points; whereas, by lying low with good hands, and inducing his opponents to declare beyond their strength, it is quite possible for him to win a rubber of 1000 points or more. A rubber can only be won once, but the opponents' declarations can be defeated any

number of times, and the more they are defeated, the more they will probably buck up and try to get it back.

In the early days of Auction Bridge, the principle of keeping the flag flying was carried much further than it is at the present time, and certain clever players reaped a rich harvest by nursing their opponents—by not trying to win the game and finish the rubber, but rather allowing their opponents to play for contracts which they had no chance of fulfilling, and to go on piling up losses which could never be retrieved. That is the principle of declaring below the value of one's hand.

We now come to the occasions when a player ought to declare above the value of his hand. There are two objects with which it is sometimes right to declare above the value of one's hand: first to force the opponents up and to tempt them to enter into a bigger contract than they can perform; and secondly, to prevent them from winning the game, even at the risk of losing something oneself above the line. This second is known as the principle of keeping the flag flying. It is a proceeding fraught with much danger; but when the opponents have a practical certainty, or at any rate a strong probability, of winning the game and rubber—not the game only, but the game and rubber—on a declaration which they have made, it may be good policy to incur an almost certain loss above the line in order to prevent

their going out, in the hope of being able to pull the game out of the fire eventually.

Suppose that the score is one game all, and that your opponents are 16 up in the last game. Your hand is—

♠ ..... Knave, 9, 4, 2

♥ ..... 6

♣ ..... Queen, 9, 5

♦ ..... Ace, King, Queen, Knave, 2

You have called "Two Diamonds," and your opponents call "Two Hearts." Your hand is worth five tricks, or at the very outside six tricks, with the diamond call; but you cannot afford to leave your opponents in with their "Two Hearts" call, as they will be more than likely to win the game and rubber; so you must declare "Three Diamonds," and trust to your partner being able to win three or four tricks. If the opponents overcall you again with "Three Hearts," you should even declare "Four Diamonds"—not that you have any hope of fulfilling your contract by winning ten tricks, but in order to keep the flag flying, and to prevent their winning the rubber.

The situation is worth looking carefully into. If they get their three tricks in hearts, which they probably will do, it means that they score 24 for points; certainly 16, and very likely 32, or even more, for honours; and the 250 rubber points in addition, amounting to a grand total of over 300 points.

That is one side of the question ; now take the other side. If you declare "Four Diamonds," and get two under, it means a loss of 100 points above the line, and you have your 48 for honours to set off against it, leaving you with a loss of only 52 points on the transaction ; that is to say, you are taking a 6 to 1 chance. You fully expect to lose 50 points as against an equal probability of losing 300. If you eventually lose the rubber, your flag-flying will have cost you something ; but if you win it, you will have gained a great deal, and you must remember that those 250 points are still in abeyance ; you have still as good a chance as they have, the fact of being 16 up counting for very little at Auction Bridge. It is simply a matter of a quick estimation of the odds. If you are a bit of a gambler, you will keep the flag flying, within reasonable limits, when it is a case of saving or losing the rubber, and when the odds against you are not too long.

If you prefer to play a safety game, you will probably accept the first loss, and retire from the contest without risking anything.

It is quite impossible for anyone to give advice as to how long, and at what cost, the flag should be kept flying, or when it should be hauled down. It is entirely a matter of individual intuition, and it is just as certain that one man will do it at the wrong moment, as that another man will do it at the right one. Every player must judge for himself, and play his hand according to his own lights.

When you have two suits of nearly equal strength, it is generally better to declare the less valuable of the two first. Say that your hand is—

♠ .....	9
♥ .....	Ace, King, 8, 5, 2
♣ .....	Knave, 3
♦ .....	Ace, Queen, 7, 4, 2

At ordinary Bridge you would declare hearts on this hand without any hesitation; but at Auction Bridge it is better to begin with "One Diamond," and this for several reasons. If you declare "One Diamond," your opponents are very likely to call "One Heart," in order to force you up, and you have at once got them at a disadvantage, as you are almost certain to defeat their heart call; but if you declare "One Heart," they are not nearly so likely to try to raise you, as it will take a call of "Two Diamonds" to do it. Also, if your diamond call is doubled, whether it is "One Diamond" or "Two Diamonds," you can at once switch to the heart suit by calling the same number of tricks; whereas, if your heart call is doubled, you will be obliged to call an additional trick in diamonds, in order to get out of the double. Again, it is quite a possible placing of the cards, that the opponent on your right may hold the king of diamonds, and strength in both black suits; if so, he will declare "no trumps," in the expectation of the first lead up to him being a diamond; but you upset his calculations by leading a small heart instead, and his

“no trump” is very likely to be beaten. The diamond call is quite as good as the heart call for trick-making purposes, because you have two certain tricks, outside trumps, with the diamond call, and only one certain outside trick if hearts are trumps.

It is an enormous help to a hand to have an alternative call to switch to in case you are doubled. If your opponents have declared “Two Diamonds,” you can call “Two Hearts” on king, knave, and two others, with a view to forcing them up to “Three Diamonds,” and then doubling them, provided that you are prepared to call “Two No Trumps” if they double your “Two Hearts.” This is much better than calling “Two No Trumps” at once, as that would probably frighten them off altogether, and prevent their bidding any further. This is the principle known as “nursing” your opponents—luring them on to undertake a bigger contract than they can perform, by masking the real strength of your hand until the last moment.

Let me repeat once more that the real aim and object of the bidding is to force your opponents up to the breaking point—to the point at which it is extremely doubtful whether they will be able to fulfil their contract; and, when you have got them there, to leave them there; not to offer them the smallest loophole of escape if you can possibly help it. The difficulty is to judge when this point has been reached, and it is here that the really clever Auction Bridge player excels. He nearly always manages to draw in his horns just at the right

moment, while the less clever player thinks he will go for just one more rise ; and it is that last rise which so often lands him in the net himself, instead of getting his opponents into it.

The desire to bid your opponents up is a most laudable ambition. It is more than that. It is one of the most useful and most interesting features in the game of Auction Bridge. To do it skilfully and with success entails the use of a nice discrimination, and of considerable finesse. It is always right to bid them up when you can do so with safety—that is to say, when you can do it without calling above the value of your own hand. Sometimes you should go further than that. There are occasions when it is good play to overcall your hand considerably in your endeavour to force the other side up. These occasions are of two kinds. Firstly, when they have made a call which will win the game, if they fulfil their contract. In that case it is worth while to run a certain amount of risk of being defeated yourself, rather than to allow them to win the game cheaply. Secondly, when you can see a good chance of defeating them, if they can be driven up to a higher call. This is where the finesse comes in. It requires very nice judgment to know exactly how far to go. You are treading on rather dangerous ground in calling above the value of your own hand, simply in order to force them up, unless the game is in actual danger. That is the real turning-point—whether the game is in danger or not.

Remember that intermediate scores are of very little moment at Auction Bridge. There is none of the mounting up of the score, little by little, until the crucial point of 30 is arrived at, which is such an important factor at ordinary Bridge. A very large majority of the games at Auction Bridge are won, or would equally have been won, from the score of love. Intermediate scores are hardly worth thinking about, and certainly not worth playing for. There are two valuable assets to play for, and all other considerations should be subservient to those two. The first is, to win the game yourself; the second, to defeat your opponents' call. Even these two are relative, and may change places. It is not worth while to forego a good chance of winning the game for the sake of scoring 100 points above the line; but, when there is any likelihood of scoring 300 or 400 points, the situation is very different. This is something worth going for, and should not be lightly given up, especially if you should happen to be already a game to the good. If you are a game behind, then it is of paramount importance to get on even terms; but, when you are a game to the good, there is no occasion for hurry; you can afford to wait a little, and to avail yourself of any desirable plums, such as 200 or 300 points above the line, which the Fates, or your opponents, may be kind enough to offer to you.

The one consideration which should really influence the question of overbidding your opponents

is, whether they are likely to win the game on the declaration which they have made. If they are likely to do so, or if there is any chance of their doing so, then it behoves you to exert yourself—to bid them up if you possibly can, even to the extent of calling above the value of your hand. To put the matter plainly, it is an occasion to try to bluff them into a higher call, which they will, of necessity, be less likely to get.

When the game is safe—that is, when there is no chance of the opponents winning it on the declaration which they have made—it is bad play to make a doubtful declaration simply in order to overcall them. Leave them in, and let them do their worst. They cannot hurt you appreciably, and they may even fail to fulfil their contract. What I mean is such an instance as this: You declare “One Heart,” your opponent on the left calls “Two Diamonds,” your partner does not support you with “Two Hearts,” and the call comes round again to you. If you have a really strong hand, with a chance, however small, of winning the game, you will naturally call “Two Hearts.” That is quite simple. But if your hand is not a very strong one—if you can see no chance of winning the game on your heart call, and, at the same time, there is no chance of your opponents winning it on their diamond call—you had far better leave matters alone, and let the onus of winning eight out of the thirteen tricks rest on their shoulders instead of on yours. They will probably get their contract, you

say. Very well — let them get it. What does it matter? Whether one side or the other scores 12 or 16 points, is of very little importance at Auction Bridge. You should never be afraid of leaving the opponents in with their declaration, provided that the game is quite safe. That is what really matters. Winning the game, or saving the game, or defeating your opponents, are the three points which you should always have in view. Nothing else is worth thinking about. No consideration of whether they are likely to score 12 or 18, or you are likely to score 16, should be allowed to affect your question of declaring; provided, as I said before, that there is no chance of winning or losing the game.

The following is a good example of what I mean: A player called "Two Diamonds," and was over-called with "Three Clubs." "Three Diamonds" was the immediate response, and the declarer won seven tricks instead of nine, losing 100 points above the line. Now, what was there to be afraid of with the call of "Three Clubs"? The score was love-all. There was no possibility of losing the game on it, nor of winning the game on the "Three Diamonds" call. As a matter of fact, the opponents would not have got their "Three Clubs," and there would have been a gain of 50 or 100 points above the line, instead of a loss. That was really bad declaring, without an atom of sense in it. The bidding for the declaration is, to a great extent, a matter of common-sense. When there is anything definite to be gained by taking a little risk, take it

fearlessly; but I can see no sense in taking risks without a corresponding chance of profit.

In bidding your opponents up, you should always have some definite object in view. That object may be to win the game yourself, or to prevent their winning it, or to force them up to a point at which you are likely to defeat them. There can be no other object in it. It is worse than useless to overcall them, simply for the sake of bidding them up, when there is nothing to be gained by so doing—that is, when there is no chance of defeating them on their higher call.

The bidding is quite the most interesting, as well as the most exciting, feature of Auction Bridge, and some players get rather carried away by the excitement of it, and go considerably further than they would do in their calmer moments. It is so difficult to know when to stop. I imagine that what is called the true British spirit of not knowing when one is beaten has something to do with it. Some players never seem to know when to hold their tongue, and when to let matters rest. They are so fond of having that last word, that nothing will stop them when once they have started, and they go on bidding until their unhappy partners are inclined to wish that the gift of speech had been denied to them altogether.

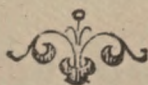
Did you ever hear the story of the talkative parrot?

There was once a parrot, the most wonderful talking bird that ever lived. Not only could he

converse fluently in several languages, but also he had an extraordinary talent for imitating animals; but this very accomplishment was the cause of his undoing. Being left one day in a room with two fox terriers, he proceeded to bark and to growl so realistically that the dogs imagined that it was one of their own species in some strange disguise, and they immediately set upon him. They got the unhappy parrot down on the floor, and used him most despitely, pulling mouthfuls of feathers out of him, and mauling him very badly.

At last he managed to get away from them, and to crawl up on to the back of a chair. It was the most dejected miserable-looking object of a parrot that ever was seen, bereft of all his feathers, covered with blood, and with only just breath enough left to utter one last memorable sentence: "The trouble with me is that I talk too much."

That is also the trouble with many Auction Bridge players. Do not we all know them, and have not we all suffered at their hands? Some of them will do well to lay this little fable seriously to heart.



## CHAPTER VIII.



## THE PERSONAL ELEMENT.

*(Reprinted, by kind permission, from the "Saturday Review.")*

THERE is no other card game into which the personal element enters so strongly as it does into Auction Bridge. By the "personal element" I mean, not only a knowledge of one's partner's methods and peculiarities—that is of great use in any partnership game—but also of one's opponents' foibles; of their habitual methods of declaring; and of how far they can be bidden up with safety

The man who is a student of character has all the makings of a successful Auction Bridge player inherent in him. This is where the Poker element comes into the game. Different players play it on such widely different lines, that a proper appreciation of their temperaments, of their individual characteristics, and of their various methods, is half the battle in gauging the strength of their hands.

If a man cuts into a table with people whom he has never played with before, he will, naturally, know nothing about their methods—he will have to pick up his knowledge as he goes along; but

this does not often happen. Most people play habitually in the same set, and it is here that the student of character, the observant and retentive player, should reap his golden harvest.

From the very first moment when you cut into a rubber, you should proceed to study your partner and his peculiarities. To begin with, if you have cut the lowest card, the right of choosing the seats and cards pertains to you, and to you alone—your partner is entirely at your orders. You may, yourself, have no prejudices at all about taking the winning cards or the winning seats; but if you find that your partner has any such prejudices, give way to him at once, and do what he wishes. Do not look down upon him from the height of your superior intelligence, and tell him that that is all rubbish—that the result cannot possibly be affected by which cards or which seats are selected. This may seem a small point, but some players have a strong predilection for taking the winning seats and the winning cards.

If you find that your partner has such a fancy, why not indulge him? It will not hurt you, and it will please him; and it is of the greatest importance to start on good terms with your partner. If you are obstinate and pig-headed enough to insist, for no good reason, upon enforcing your sole right to choose, you will very likely begin by ruffling him; and he may possibly tell you, at the end of the rubber, should you be unfortunate enough to lose it, that it was entirely your fault

for choosing the wrong cards or the wrong seats—which, to say the least of it, will not add to the harmony of the card table. This advice applies to ordinary Bridge as well as to Auction Bridge, but it is even more important to be in sympathy with your partner at Auction Bridge than it is at the older game.

The first declaration of all—the opening call by the dealer—is a fruitful field for the exercise of personal observation. The methods of different players, equally good, vary more on this call than on any other. Anybody will overcall “One Heart” with “Two Diamonds” when he has a good diamond hand—your personal knowledge will tell you nothing in that case—but, when a player has to open the game, a knowledge of his habitual methods ought to be of considerable assistance to you in estimating the value of his call.

There is a certain section of players—a section growing larger every day—who are firm believers in the value of the original call of “One No Trump.” Some of them carry the principle to great excess, and declare “One No Trump,” as dealer, on the flimsiest of pretexts. When you know that your partner belongs to this school, you have to treat his call with a great deal of caution. His “no trump” call may, of course, be quite a sound one; but, on the other hand, it may be a deplorably thin one, and you should be very chary of supporting it with “Two No Trumps” when it has been overcalled by the second player. This

is one penalty that a player who is known to be a very forward "no trump" declarer has to pay—that his call fails to inspire his partner with any confidence. With a partner of this stamp, the third player should always call two tricks in a red suit if he has any pretensions to do so. He should give his partner the chance of getting out of the "no trump" call, in case it should have been a very light one. When the dealer has called "One No Trump," it is certain that he has got something, although possibly not much; and it happens, in a large majority of cases, that a sound red suit call is better than an original "no trump."

There is also a reverse side to this practice of the dealer making very sketchy "no trump" calls. When such a player does not begin with "One No Trump," his partner should read him at once with less than an average hand. If he had an average hand—one ace, one king, one queen, etc.—he would have declared "One No Trump." When, instead of that, he calls "One Spade," there is a presumption, amounting almost to a certainty, that his hand is a very moderate one; and his partner should be careful not to fly at too high game. The "One Spade" call does not quite amount to hoisting the danger signal, but it comes very near that, and an intelligent partner will not fail to be influenced by it.

There is another section of players who are much more conservative. With them an original declaration of "One No Trump" at Auction

Bridge means nearly, if not quite, as much as an original declaration of "no trumps" at ordinary Bridge. To this school belong many good Bridge players, who have not yet played Auction Bridge long enough to divest themselves of their firmly established Bridge ideas. They had a certain standard in their own minds for a legitimate "no trump" call at Bridge; and, although they may moderate it to some extent at Auction Bridge, they cannot yet bring themselves to make an original "no trump" declaration without what they would consider to be at least the nucleus of a "no trump" hand. It is surely very easy to see what a strong bearing the personal element has upon the game in such circumstances as these.

With the latter class of player as partner, an original "no trump" call means something definite and tangible; with the former class it means little or nothing; and the player who knows his partner, and can discriminate between the two, must be at a great advantage.

Again, the significance of a suit declaration differs very widely with different partners. First-class Auction Bridge players are very reliable in this respect. When they make an original suit declaration, other than spades, they can be depended upon to have some real backbone in the suit. But all Auction Bridge players are not first-class, and some are far from being reliable. Just as, at ordinary Bridge, there are certain players who cannot bear to pass the declaration with five

hearts in their hand, so at Auction Bridge there are certain players who are so fed up with that mistaken idea of showing their best suit to their partner, that they will declare hearts or diamonds on five to the queen, or on six to the ten. No call of that kind is an original declaration at all at Auction Bridge. Four to the ace, king, or the king, queen, ten, and one other, is much sounder and better.

The original declarations at ordinary Bridge, and at Auction Bridge, are two entirely different things. At ordinary Bridge an original declaration has one object, and one only—namely, to play the hand on that call. At Auction Bridge there are two objects—firstly, to play the hand with the suit declared as trumps; and secondly, and far more important, to give information to one's partner with the view of helping him to declare "no trumps." It may help him enormously to know that his partner can command the heart suit; but the knowledge that his partner has five or six small hearts can be of no possible use to him.

Yet again, when the dealer declares "Two Spades," or "Two Clubs," it is of the greatest importance for the third player to know whether he can thoroughly rely on that call. It ought to mean the ace and king, or at least the king queen, knave, at the head of the suit; but there are players—very unsound ones—who will call "Two Spades" on numerical strength. I remember seeing a player call "Two Spades" on queen and six

small ones, and nothing else. No harm came of it in that particular instance, because the third player happened to have a bad hand: but what reliance can be placed on a partner like that?

I recently saw a striking instance of the reverse side of the medal, where the third player could thoroughly rely upon his partner. The dealer declared "Two Clubs," the second player called "Two Diamonds," the third and fourth players passed, and the dealer declared "Four Clubs"—four, mind you, although three would have been sufficient. The second player called "Three Diamonds," and the third player then went "Two No Trumps" on the ace of diamonds and the king of spades—nothing else. A diamond was led, and the dealer put down eight clubs to the quart major; and they won the game, instead of losing it, as they would have done on the diamond call. The opponents could have got "five diamonds" as the cards happened to lie, but the winning cards were divided between their two hands, and they did not know their strength. That result was brought about simply through the third player knowing his partner, and having thorough confidence in the soundness of his partner's call. With a strange partner, or with one he did not trust, the "Two No Trumps" call, on one ace and one king, would have been an impossible one.

The opportunity for estimating the value of the original declaration, from a previous knowledge

of the dealer's methods, is not confined to the dealer's partner. The opponents can do it just as well. When an original declaration of "One No Trump" has been made by a player of the conservative order, it behoves the opponents to treat it with a due amount of respect, because it is almost certain to have power behind it. When it is made by a player who is known to be a very forward declarer, it has nothing like the same significance. It may, of course, be quite a sound call; but it may also be a very unsound one. The second player should be governed a great deal by his knowledge of the dealer's methods in determining whether to overbid the dealer's "no trump" declaration, or whether it will be wiser to leave it alone. This knowledge will be of still more use from a negative point of view. When a very forward declarer begins with "One Spade," his opponents should immediately place him with a hand well below the average, and should not lose sight of that deduction. It ought to be of considerable use to them to know that one of the two hands opposed to them is a weak one, and that nothing much is to be feared from that quarter. Armed with this knowledge, they can declare with much greater freedom, and a "no trump" call which would have been a doubtful one, under other conditions, becomes quite a good one; but this knowledge can only be derived from a careful study of the dealer's customary methods of declaring.

The same principle applies, all along the line, in the bidding for the declaration. Some players always try to bid their opponents up, and some times make very risky calls in their endeavour to do so. Others play a more backward game, and never overbid a previous declaration without good cause. Just think how useful it must be for a player to be able to say to himself, "That call is certain to be a sound one," or "That call is very likely to be a bluffing one." Nothing but a personal knowledge of his opponents' methods will enable him to do this.

The very expert Auction Bridge player will endeavour to vary his methods of declaring as much as possible, with the special object of making it difficult for his opponents to draw these sort of inferences. Here, again, a thorough knowledge of the player, and of his capabilities, is most important. Varying the method of procedure, from hand to hand, is a refinement of the game which not many players rise to. There are some who do it, but they are the few, not the many. The ordinary everyday Auction Bridge player has his own pet methods, which he believes in, and which he can generally be trusted to stick to, and to reproduce time after time. The great thing is to know those pet methods, so as to be prepared to read them correctly. For instance, some players believe strongly in the principle known as "keeping the flag flying," and will nearly always declare above the value of their hand, when they think that their

opponents are likely to win the game. Others are ultra-conservative, and pride themselves on rarely losing anything above the line on their own declarations. When such a player overcalls a previous bid, he can be trusted to have very substantial grounds for his call.

There are certain players who give away a great deal of information by their mannerisms in declaring. Sometimes you will see them evidently bursting with anxiety to make a declaration. Directly their turn arrives, out it comes, without a moment's hesitation, and you know that the call, whatever it may be, is a strong one. At other times they will hesitate, go over their cards two or three times, obviously summing up the possibilities of their hand, and eventually make a half-hearted sort of call. The inference is too patent to need specifying.

The observant player notes all these indications, and uses them to his own advantage; but they have no value for the unobservant, irresponsible player. He goes on in his own stolid, unsympathetic way, and perhaps wonders vaguely how it is that his quicker adversary seems to have such a much better grasp of the situation.

So far we have only dealt with the declarations of the dealer and the second player, but the personal element comes in more strongly still in the later phases of the bidding, when one side is bidding stoutly against the other. Some players never know when to stop. When once they get

fairly started, bidding on a good hand, they will go on to almost any extent, if they are pushed up; and these are the easiest of opponents to defeat. You can bid them up with safety, on a call which you know that you are not in the least likely to get, feeling sure that they will rise like fishes to the bait, until you get them altogether out of their depth. Then you double them, and probably score an amount, above the line, which was well worth running a little risk for. In playing that game it is absolutely essential to have a thorough knowledge of your opponents' peculiarities. You must be quite sure that they belong to the type of players who believe in trying to win the game at all hazards, otherwise you may fall into the net yourself.

There are two distinct types, or schools, of players at Auction Bridge. The one school always go out for winning the game, if they can see any possible chance of so doing. The others are always on the look-out for a chance of doubling their opponents, and of scoring 200 or 300 points above the line. Here, again, a knowledge of which school your opponents belong to should be invaluable to you, and should influence you greatly in your most laudable endeavour to bid them up. If they belong to the former school, you can bid them up with the greatest freedom, knowing that they will go on to the fullest extent of their hands, and probably a good deal beyond that. If they belong to the latter school, you must exercise caution. They may be playing the same game on you, trying to

get you out of your depth; and that last bid of yours, designed to drive them up to the doubling point, may result instead in your own undoing.

As I said before, there are certain players who are always on the look-out for the chance of doubling, or of "stinging," as it is frequently called. It is an extremely dangerous practice to declare above the value of your hand in your endeavour to bid such opponents up. They have an unpleasant habit of turning round and rending you. There are other players who never dream of "stinging" their adversaries on anything short of a practical certainty. It does not seem to enter into their calculations that doubling is an integral part, and a very important part, of the game of Auction Bridge. They miss the point altogether. Such players have been somewhat aptly termed "bumble bees"—possessing no sting; although, as a matter of natural history, I believe that bumble bees do possess a sting of sorts.

These are easy opponents. When you know that there is but little chance of your declaration being doubled, you have a much freer hand, and you are in a position to take liberties. When, on the contrary, you have an idea that your opponent may be only bidding you up, possibly baiting a little trap for you, and waiting to pounce down upon you and double you, your game is necessarily somewhat cramped, and you are afraid to make a further declaration which you otherwise would have done. Here, again, is a fine personal distinction to be drawn—between the opponent who

rarely, or never, doubles, and the one who will do so on the smallest provocation. They require to be treated on quite different lines.

There are some players who are easily frightened by a double, and this is a personal peculiarity which is well worth noting. Many a successful bluff has been brought off against a player of this class. Here is an instance which occurred. The dealer declared "One Heart," the second player passed, and the third player declared "One No Trump." The fourth player had a bad hand, but he had five hearts headed by the queen. His hand was of no value at all against a "no trump" call, but it had a certain value against a call of "Two Hearts." He knew the dealer well, and was quite sure that he would think it obligatory upon him to take his partner out of a doubled call. Therefore he doubled the "One No Trump," and it came off to perfection. The dealer declared "Two Hearts," and succeeded in getting his contract; but he only won two by cards, counting 16; whereas he and his partner would have won a big game if he had not been so easily frightened by the double.

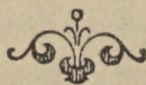
The following case, which also occurred in actual play, affords a still better example of the same thing. The dealer opened with "Two Hearts"; the second player declared "Three Diamonds"; and the third player doubled. The fourth player had no diamonds at all, but he had quite a useful hand, with considerable strength in



won only six tricks, five in hearts (trumps), and one in clubs, losing 300 points above the line. The declarations were all quite sound ones, until A's last call of "Three Hearts." He was frightened into this by Z's re-double, and he was no doubt influenced to some extent by the 64 for honours in his own hand; but a gain of 64 points is of little avail against a loss of 300.

Z's re-double was a risky one, as it might have resulted in doubling his loss; but, as I have already stipulated, he knew his man, and this knowledge enabled him to convert a serious loss into an agreeable profit. The ruse is quite a common and well-known one, and many players would have tumbled to it—to use a colloquial expression—and would have left Z with his re-double. A, however, was not built that way, and he cost his unfortunate partner some 500 or 600 points.

I could quote endless other instances of the same kind, but I think that I have said enough to illustrate the enormous value of this personal element in Auction Bridge, and that I have sufficiently shown how greatly the bidding for the declaration may be, and ought to be, influenced by a knowledge of other players' idiosyncrasies.



## CHAPTER IX.

## DOUBLING.

IN no point does Auction Bridge differ so widely from its parent game of Bridge as in the value of doubling. At ordinary Bridge, doubling is of rare occurrence, except on a spade declaration. At Auction Bridge it is an integral part of the bidding for the declaration, and it has a very important bearing on the game itself. The primary object of a player in bidding up the declaration is, or should be, not to win the game as quickly as possible, but to endeavour to induce his opponents to declare above the value of their hands, until they reach a point when their declaration can be doubled with advantage.

There is one very important feature about doubling, in regard to which Auction Bridge and ordinary Bridge are very different. When a declaration is doubled at ordinary Bridge, the declarer has no chance of getting out of his trouble. He is obliged to abide by his original declaration. At Auction Bridge, on the contrary, a player whose declaration has been doubled, or his partner, can slip out of it by making some other declaration, provided that it is of higher value; and this will nearly always occur when a declaration has been

doubled too soon. For this reason, it is hardly ever right to double a call of one trick in a suit, however strong the doubler's hand may be, as the declarer will get out of the mess by declaring "One No Trump," or two tricks in some other suit.

I well remember falling into this error myself soon after I began to play Auction Bridge. The dealer, on my right, declared "One No Trump." I held eight clubs, headed by the quart major; and, without stopping to think, I promptly doubled the "no trump" call, just as I should have done at ordinary Bridge. The result was that they branched to "Two Hearts," of which I had only one; and we lost four by cards and the game. That disaster came about through my not realising the difference between doubling at Auction and at ordinary Bridge. Had I possessed my present knowledge of the game, I should have passed the "no trump" declaration; it would have been left at "One No Trump," and we should have scored at least 100 points above the line, while our opponents would have scored nothing.

That is quite a good object-lesson in doubling too soon, while the opponents have a chance of branching into some other, and probably better, declaration.

Suppose that a declaration of "One Heart" is made, and that the next player has a hand on which he would not hesitate to double at ordinary Bridge, he should never do so at Auction. He should declare "One No Trump" if he has the

smallest nucleus of a "no trump" hand ; and then, if the original declarer or his partner calls "Two Hearts," he will be in a fine position to double, as the only possible means that the opponents will have of getting out of it will be to call "Three Diamonds," which is rather a large undertaking.

If he has no pretensions to declare "No Trumps," he should call "Two Clubs" or "Two Diamonds," if he can do so without much danger of being doubled himself ; or, failing even that, he should pass, in the hope that his partner may be able to call something. If the call is left at "One Heart," the declarer will probably fail to fulfil even that contract, and something will be scored above the line, although not so much ; but there is such a thing as being too greedy, and it often happens that premature doubling defeats its own ends by allowing the opponents to branch into another, and a less dangerous, declaration. The finesse of the game lies in judging when to try to force the opponents up to a point at which they can be advantageously doubled, and when to hold one's hand. It sometimes happens that the would-be doubler is hoist with his own petard by getting doubled himself ; but this is a risk which is well worth taking, and which does not often materialise.

In bidding for the declaration at Auction Bridge you should always have two definite objects in view. Your first object should be to win the game ; your second, to bid your opponents up to a point at

which you can safely double their declaration. There are some players who always go for the one object, and some who always go for the other. The two really work in very well together, and the proper combination of the two is what constitutes skilful and intelligent bidding.

At the commencement of the bidding, your aim will naturally be to make any declaration on which there is a chance of winning the game, or at any rate of making a good score. You make that declaration, and you are overcalled by your adversaries. What will you do then? You should ask yourself two questions. Firstly, "Is there any chance of my winning the game, if I increase my call?" Secondly, "Am I likely to be able to defeat the other side, if they are driven up?" Very possibly the answer to both questions will be in the affirmative. There you have the two objects working in together. You increase your call, and they also increase theirs. Then you have to ask yourself the same questions again; but this time the second question, at any rate, should be easier to answer.

If you think that you are certain to defeat them, double them at once, unless your prospect of winning the game is very nearly a certainty. Do not sacrifice the substance for the shadow by making a call on which there is the faintest chance of getting beaten, when you are practically certain to be able to defeat the other side.

Let me give an instance. You declare "One No Trump" on a fairly good hand. Your oppo-

nents call "Two Hearts." You are well guarded in the heart suit—say king, ten, eight, three—so that it is doubtful whether they would get their "Two Hearts"; but they might get it. You should declare "Two No Trumps," again working the two objects together. If they retire from the contest, you have a chance of winning the game; but if they amend their call to "Three Hearts," you can then double them with great advantage, as their chance of fulfilling their contract must be small indeed. This is the sort of position where some players, who are great believers in always trying the game, will go on and declare "Three No Trumps"; but the call must be a bad one. If there is any chance of winning three by cards at "No Trumps," there can be no possibility of the opponents winning nine tricks with hearts as trumps. The stronger the "no trump" hand, the more impossible does it become for the other side to get "Three Hearts." This is a plain case of sacrificing the substance for the shadow.

Players who rarely, or never double, miss the true spirit, and the finesse, of the game altogether. There are plenty of such players. They declare up to the full value of their hand, and perhaps a little beyond it; but there the "Auction" part ends, as far as they are concerned. They think that there is no more in the game. They have no idea of the possibilities which are always running through the mind of the skilful player, and which he is always trying to work up to—it is a sealed book to them.

Judicious doubling is the finest feature in the game of Auction Bridge. It is here that the good player makes his profit, and that the inferior player misses his chances. All the big rubbers, of 1000 points or more, that one hears of, owe their magnitude to judicious doubling. It is not only the life and soul of the game, but also it is the paying part of the game. The player who never doubles may hold exceptionally good cards for a time, and may win more rubbers than he loses during that time, but you may depend upon it that he will not be a winner in the long run.

There is a great deal in doubling to the score. In your commendable anxiety to double your opponents, you must not lose sight of the fact that their score below the line will be doubled if they succeed in fulfilling their contract. If you double a declaration of "Two Hearts" at the score of love-all, you may be giving away the game by a rash double; but if your opponents are already 16 or more up, it is quite a different matter. The possible extra loss which you may incur by doubling is now of very little moment, as they will win the game in any case, if they fulfil their contract, and it is even possible that your double of the "Two Hearts" declaration may frighten them into branching into "Three Diamonds" or "Two No Trumps," which they will have still less chance of getting.

I once saw a very pretty instance in a hand which I was watching. The dealer was a game and

24 up, and he declared an original "no trump." The second and third players passed, and the fourth player doubled. The fourth player's hand was—

♠	.....	King, 7, 2
♥	.....	Queen, 10, 8, 4
♣	.....	Knave, 8
♦	.....	King, 9, 7, 5

This would appear to be quite an impossible hand on which to double an original "no trump" declaration, probably based, as it was, on three aces; but there was great method in the madness. The fourth player, holding the above hand, could see no possibility of defeating a call of "One No Trump," but he had four of each red suit; and, if he could induce either of his opponents to branch into two tricks in a red suit, there was a chance, although a small one, of winning six tricks, and so saving the game. It succeeded to perfection. The dealer passed, and the third player, in order to get his partner out of the doubled "no trump," declared "Two Hearts" on king, knave, and two small ones. The one ace which the dealer did not hold was the ace of hearts; and, although they won the odd trick, they failed to get their contract, and lost 66 points on the hand—50 for the one under-trick, and 16 for honours—instead of winning the game, as they would easily have done on the original "no trump" call. The double was a very desperate bluff, and one not to be recommended to beginners, although it came off in this particular case; but I

quote it to illustrate the sort of chances which are sometimes taken by good players when they are in a tight corner.

When the declaration has run into very big figures, such as "Four Hearts" or "Four Diamonds," it is not necessary to have even moderate strength in trumps in order to double, provided that you can win tricks in the other suits. To engage to win ten tricks out of the thirteen is a very big undertaking, and the declarer is not in the least likely to have nine or ten trumps; he has undoubtedly got a great many—say six, or possibly seven—and the remaining three tricks will have to be picked up out of the other suits. If you can command the other three suits, it is quite plain that he will not be able to pick up those other three tricks, and he will fail in his contract, or "come unstitched," to use the popular phrase; and you should therefore double, so as to increase his prospective loss and your prospective gain.

The following is a hand which occurred in play, and which is quite a good example of the above theory. The dealer, A, held—

♠	.....	Ace, Queen, 10, 4
♥	.....	King, 7, 2
♣	.....	Ace, King, 8, 3
♦	.....	3, 2

The bidding proceeded :—

A, One No Trump; Y, No; B, Two Hearts;  
Z, Three Diamonds.

A, Three Hearts; Y, Four Diamonds; B, No; Z, No.

A, "I double Four Diamonds"; Y, B, Z, Content.

In this case, A doubled with only two little trumps in his hand, but he was quite right to do so. YZ had obviously called above their hands to prevent AB winning the rubber—to keep the flag flying—and they could have no chance of winning ten tricks, unless Z had nine diamonds in his hand; and this could not be the case, as Y had supported his partner by declaring “Four Diamonds,” thereby showing considerable strength in the trump suit, as he could not have much in the other suits.

The supporting a partner by showing him that you can afford him some help in the suit, is a very good thing, and should always be done; but it also affords a good deal of information to an intelligent adversary, by telling him that the declarer has not got an overwhelmingly long suit, but that the trumps are more or less divided.

There is all the difference in the world between a double which will enable the opponents to win the game in case of their exactly fulfilling their contract, and what is known as a “free” double. A free double occurs when the opponents have made a declaration which will win the game if they fulfil their contract; so that the only damage done, should the double fail, will be the loss of a few extra points, which is not of vital importance.

If the declaring side call “Three Diamonds” with their score at 12, the opponents have the

chance of a free double. A call of "Two No Trumps" at the score of 6 or more, is also a free double; or a call of "Four Hearts" at any point of the score, or any call which is sufficient in itself to win the game if the contract is fulfilled. A proper appreciation of the difference between these two situations is a great element of success at Auction Bridge. A doubtful double is always a bad one when it will enable the opponents to win the game if it fails; but the same double becomes quite a good one when they would win the game in any case, and the only risk incurred is the loss of a few extra points.

Under the new rules, a bonus of 50 points above the line has been given to the declarer who fulfils his contract when he has been doubled. Personally, I consider that this was a mistake, as the tendency of it must be to discountenance doubling, which is one of the most interesting features of the game. But even with this extra bonus of 50 points, the possible gain on a double of a very high declaration, such as four tricks in a suit, is so much greater than the possible loss, that the risk is well worth taking, always provided that it is a free double.

A double of a one-trick declaration is nearly always bad, except in the case of an original spade call; and a double of a two-trick declaration is dangerous on anything much short of a certainty, as the prospective loss is then greater than the prospective gain; but when you get up to declara-

tions of three or four tricks, the situation is altered entirely, as nine or ten tricks take a tremendous lot of getting, and it is quite possible that the declarer may fail to fulfil his contract by a very large margin. For every double of a high declaration that fails, there will be three or four fine chances missed ; and the good player—or I should rather say, the successful player—is ever on the look-out for an opportunity to double, when his opponents have been forced up to making an exceptionally high call.

Sometimes it will happen that one side has all the strength in the heart suit, and the other side all the strength in diamonds, and they will go on calling against one another, sooner than leave the others in, until they have both got rather out of their depth. In that case it will probably be the high cards in the black suits which will turn the scale ; and a player who has taken no part in the bidding at all, can occasionally step in at the finish and double to great advantage, when the bidding has got very high. The situation is so easy to understand. One player has a very strong suit of hearts, and the other a very strong suit of diamonds. Neither of them can afford to leave the other in to win the game, and neither of them dare call “Two No Trumps” for fear of the long suit declared against him ; so they go on bidding against one another, until the player who can command the two black suits becomes practically the master of the situation.

This happens far more often than one would expect. As I said before, when the declaration gets very high, beyond the compass of an ordinary good hand, it is not necessary to hold strength in the declared suit in order to double with success. It may happen that the declarer has a phenomenal trump hand, but phenomena are necessarily very rare, and it will generally be found that the declarer has gone beyond his strength, in his anxiety to prevent his opponents winning the game, and that high cards in the other suits will defeat him. At ordinary Bridge, it is a fatal policy to double a suit declaration without considerable strength in trumps, because the declarer has only to win seven tricks in order to score; but when he contracts to win nine or ten tricks, and scores nothing unless he wins those nine or ten tricks, the situation is altered altogether, and trumps become of much smaller value, compared to aces and kings of the other suits.

There seems to be a prevalent idea among players that, when a declaration is doubled, it is imperative upon the partner of the declarer to get him out of his trouble by making some other call, which is usually a quite unjustifiable one, and one which only leads to worse difficulties. Certainly, the partner ought to relieve the situation if he can do so with comparative safety; but to make a wild irresponsible call, because one's partner's declaration has been doubled, is only

jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire, and is generally attended by grave disaster. Also, it is by no means a certainty that the declarer is anxious to be relieved of his doubled declaration; he may be quite content to stay where he is, especially now that there is an added bonus of 50 points if he succeeds in fulfilling his contract.

The following case, which occurred in a rubber in which I was playing, will illustrate what I mean:—

	♠ 6	
	♥ 7	
	♣ A, K, Q, Knv, 5	
	♦ K, Q, 10, 5, 3, 2	
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p><b>B</b></p> <p><b>Y</b>                      <b>Z</b></p> <p>Dealer <b>A</b></p> </div>	
♠ A, K, Q, Kv, 7, 2		♠ 8, 5, 4, 3
♥ Ace, Queen		♥ 10, 8, 5, 4, 2
♣ 10, 3		♣ 9
♦ Ace, 9, 6		♦ Knave, 7, 4
	♠ 10, 9	
	♥ K, Knv, 9, 6, 3	
	♣ 8, 7, 6, 4, 2	
	♦ 8	

A, One Spade; Y, One No Trump; B, Two Diamonds;  
Z, No.

A, No; Y, Two No Trumps; B, Double Two No Trumps;  
Z, Three Hearts.

A, Double Three Hearts; Y, B, and Z, Content.

The bidding was all perfectly sound and rational up to, and including, B's double of "Two No Trumps." He had five certain tricks in clubs, and the diamonds well guarded; and his partner must have something in hearts, as neither of the opponents had called hearts. Z's declaration of "Three Hearts" was simply ridiculous—there is no other word for it—but he was so imbued with this mistaken idea that he was bound to take his partner out of the doubled call, that he managed to convert a fine winning position into a bad losing one. If he had let matters alone, as he ought to have done, his partner would have got his contract, and they would have scored 48 below the line and 80 above; instead of that, they lost 300 points, less 16 for honours.

When a declaration has been doubled, the declarer can sometimes bluff his opponents out of their strong position by re-doubling, even when he has no possible chance of getting his contract. Suppose that A declares "One Heart," Y overcalls him with "Two Diamonds," B doubles "Two Diamonds," Z and A both pass. If Y re-doubles, B is not able to go any further, as only one re-double is allowed, so he has to pass; and A, when it comes round to his turn, is almost certain to call "Two Hearts," not knowing how strong Y's re-double may be. I saw this exact position occur once, when Y had made a very weak "Two Diamonds" call, in order to force A up to "Two Hearts." B doubled, Y re-doubled,

and A fell right into the trap and called "Two Hearts," only to be promptly doubled by Y, who certainly may be said to have had the best of the argument.

This kind of bluff is, of course, a very dangerous proceeding, as it entails a loss of 200 points per trick if the opponents refuse to rise to the bait, and leave the declarer with his re-doubled declaration; but desperate measures are sometimes required to get out of desperate situations, and the sensation of bringing off this bluff is a very pleasing one. It is necessary to know one's opponents' characteristics very well to be justified in attempting it. Against some opponents, who are very fond of having the last say, it would be almost a certainty; but against others, who understand the game thoroughly, and are not in the least likely to be taken in, it would be too dangerous to try.



## CHAPTER X.

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### THE OPENING LEAD.

I TAKE it for granted that my readers have served their apprenticeship at the game of ordinary Bridge, and that they are thoroughly conversant with the accepted opening leads, both against a "No Trump" call, and against a suit declaration, as set forth in the numerous Bridge text books. Assuming this knowledge, it is not necessary to go through the various leads in detail, but only to point out in what respects the opening lead at Auction Bridge differs from its fellow at ordinary Bridge. There is one point of difference which is worth noting—namely, that the first lead at Auction Bridge is always up to the declaring hand, never through it, as is the case at ordinary Bridge, when the declaration has been made by the Dummy.

#### "NO TRUMPS."

The opening lead at "No Trumps" depends a good deal upon what has already taken place; whether there has been any previous bidding, or whether the dealer has made an original declaration of "One No Trump," which has not been

overcalled. In the latter case, which is a very common one, the game is precisely the same as at ordinary Bridge, and should be played upon precisely the same lines. The leader should open his numerically strongest suit, and should lead his fourth-best, unless he holds one of the recognised combinations of high cards. Do not be tempted to lead out a winning card first in order to have a "look round." There is no more object for this proceeding at Auction Bridge than at the ordinary game; the principle is exactly the same, and the hard-and-fast rules laid down for the leader in all the Bridge books, should be just as strictly observed. There is only one point of difference, and that a small one. At ordinary Bridge, when the leader holds a red and a black suit of nearly equal value, it is always considered better to open the red suit in preference to the black one, up to a "No Trump" call. There is not much in the idea at Bridge, but at Auction Bridge the position is exactly reversed.

When the dealer has made an original call of "One No Trump," you are a good deal more likely to hit on his weak spot by leading a black suit up to him than by leading a red suit, for reasons which were explained on page 131. The most common basis of an original "No Trump" call by the dealer is that he is well guarded in both red suits, and not very strong in one or both of the black suits, and he calls "No Trumps" at once in order to prevent his opponents making a call in a black suit.

Many good Bridge players, when they have to open the game from a hopeless hand, occasionally depart from the rule of opening their numerically strongest suit, and lead what they hope will be a strengthening card for their partner. At ordinary Bridge, the lead selected for this purpose is always a heart. At Auction Bridge, under similar conditions, the lead should be the highest of a black suit, never a red one. This little tip is well worth remembering, and will sometimes prove very useful.

When the leader's partner has made a previous declaration, and has been overcalled with "No Trumps," the situation is altered. In this case, it is generally advisable for the leader to open his partner's suit rather than his own, for the obvious reason that a suit which is led up to must be easier to establish than a suit which has to be led away from.

In opening a partner's suit, the highest of two or three cards should always be led, whatever they may be, and the lowest of four, unless one of the four is the ace, when the ace should be led first, followed by the lowest of the remaining three. Some players always lead the highest of their partner's suit, whether they hold three or four; but I do not agree with this at all. If you have four cards of a suit of which your partner has presumably got five, there are very few to be divided between the other two hands, and the lead of your highest is very unlikely to help him to finesse successfully; but it may be of the greatest use to him to know that you have four of the suit, as he can then place the remaining cards exactly.

Say that you hold knave, eight, five, two—if you lead the two, your partner knows that you have either three more, or no more, and he will generally be able to judge which it is; whereas, if you lead the knave, it tells him nothing whatever about the rest of the suit: you may have one more, or two more, or no more—he certainly will not read you with three more.

I need hardly say that you must be careful not to block the suit. If there is any chance of doing that, lead a high one by all means; or, if you hold any sort of head sequence, such as queen, knave, or knave, ten, with two others, lead the highest of the sequence, and keep a low card to unblock with.

I began by saying that it is “generally” advisable to open your partner’s suit in preference to your own; but do not run away with the idea that there is any obligation to do so. The combination of the two hands is the thing to aim at, and it is just as great a mistake to play for your partner’s hand to the exclusion of your own, as to play for your own hand to the exclusion of his. If you have a good suit of your own, such as king, queen, knave to five, open that suit first, and lead his suit afterwards, when you have made your own winning cards; but if you have no suit in your hand which will be established with the loss of one trick, then it is right to go for your partner’s declared suit at once.

When your partner has made no bid, and given no indication at all about his hand, you should open your own best suit just as you would at ordinary Bridge, notwithstanding that the declarer has called "Two No Trumps" after you have called "Two Hearts" or "Two Diamonds," thereby showing that he is guarded in your suit. Suppose that you hold ace, queen to five or six hearts, and that the opponent on your right has overcalled your "Two Hearts" with "Two No Trumps": the king of hearts is practically marked in the declarer's hand, and it is certainly very tempting to try to put your partner in with some other lead, so as to get your suit led through the declaring hand; but it is a bad game to play, although it is frequently done. If you open your heart suit in the usual way, with your fourth-best, it is certain that you will give away the first trick in it, perhaps very cheaply; but directly your partner gets in—and remember that you are supposing him to have a card of entry—he will return your suit through the king, and you will make every other trick in it, unless the king was originally three times guarded. Also, by opening another suit at random, you may cut your partner's hand up badly; whereas, if you open your own suit, and the declarer wins the first trick, however cheaply, he then has to lead up to your partner, and there must be a better chance of his winning a trick when he is fourth in hand than when the declarer is lying over him.

On the same principle, some players will not begin with their partner's declared suit, because "Two No Trumps" has been called over his "Two Hearts" or "Two Diamonds"; but what can be the sense of this? The suit has got to be led sooner or later, and the declarer must make his winning card or winning cards in it; and surely the declarer of the suit must have a better chance of establishing it when it is led to him, than if he has to open it himself up to nothing in his partner's hand.

Every now and again a trick may be lost by the leader opening his longest suit, or his partner's declared suit, up to a call of two or three tricks in "no trumps"; but it is the method which pays best in the long run, and I have seen a great many games lost simply because the original leader would not play the hand on the recognised lines of ordinary Bridge.

On one occasion our opponents were a game and 24 up; the player on my right dealt and made an original call of "One Diamond." My hand was—

♠	.....	Ace, Knave, 9, 5
♥	.....	Ace, King, 8, 3
♣	.....	Ace, 8, 3
♦	.....	7, 4

I declared "One No Trump." My left-hand adversary called "Two Diamonds," the others passed, and I called "Two No Trumps," more with the object of keeping the flag flying than

with any idea of getting my "Two No Trumps," and hoping, from the diamond declaration on both sides, that there would not be more than five in one hand. To my great surprise, the leader led the queen of hearts, saying, as he did so, "He thinks I am going to lead a diamond, but I am not." My partner put down six clubs, headed by king, queen, knave, and the king of spades, and the result was that we won a small Slam. The leader had ace, knave, and two other diamonds; his partner, the original declarer, had six diamonds headed by king, queen; and my partner had the ten single. If the diamond suit had been opened to begin with, we should have lost six tricks in diamonds, and our contract as well. As the hand was played, we won the game, and eventually the rubber. That was a very extreme case, but it serves to illustrate my argument.

A spade declaration by the dealer is not an indication of strength in the spade suit, and must never be regarded as such for purposes of opening the game against a "no trump" call. If your partner has called nothing but spades, unless it was an original call of "Two Spades," you must disregard his declaration altogether, and open your own long suit.

"No trump" declarations are made very lightly at Auction Bridge—on considerably less strength than is generally held to be necessary at ordinary Bridge; and therefore it is the more incumbent upon the leader to follow the lines which experi-

ence has proved to be the most paying against a "no trump" call, by opening his numerically strongest suit, or his partner's declared suit. The establishment and bringing in of a long suit has always been recognised as the best means of defending a "no trump" call at Bridge, and precisely the same argument applies to Auction Bridge.

The one exception to the opening lead following the lines of ordinary Bridge, is when the third player has doubled a "no trump" call. There is now no question of the "heart convention," or of the "short-suit convention." No such conventions exist at Auction Bridge at all, and the leader has to rely solely on his own judgment. The double of a call of "One No Trump," by the third player, is very rare at Auction Bridge. When it does occur, the leader ought to open his own best suit, if he has one of any trick-making value; if not, he should lead the highest card of his weakest black suit, as his partner would have called "Two Hearts," or "Two Diamonds," if he had been very strong in either red suit.

When the third player doubles a "no trump" call, it is nearly always a call of "Two No Trumps," or "Three No Trumps"; and in that case there will have been previous bidding, and the dealer will be in no doubt as to which suit to open. If it should happen that he and his partner have made calls in different suits, he should open his partner's suit in preference to

his own, unless his own suit is already established. When this double occurs, the position is nearly always clearly defined, and there is rarely any doubt about the best opening lead.

### SUIT DECLARATIONS.

The opening lead against a suit declaration should be governed by the same general principles as at ordinary Bridge; but it is affected to some extent by the value of the declaration, whether it is one, or two, or three, or even four tricks. When the declaration is a comparatively low one, such as one or two tricks, the Bridge principles hold good; but when it is a very high one—say, “Four Diamonds”—every trick that you can win becomes of such great value, that your object should be to annex tricks as quickly as possible, before the declarer has time to get any discards in either hand.

The opening lead of an ace, bad as I have always held it to be at ordinary Bridge, becomes quite a good one under these conditions, as it at least secures one trick, and it enables you to see what possibilities there may be of picking up the other two or three which are required.

If your partner has called any suit, other than spades, or has doubled any suit, that should be your first lead in nine cases out of ten; but even then, if you are lucky enough to hold the ace, king of another suit, you should lead the king first, so

as to show your partner how to put you in again, in case he should want his suit led up to him a second time.

Just as in the "no trump" game, there is no obligation to open with your partner's suit unless you think it advisable to do so. If you have a suit of your own in which you can win one or two tricks—say, king, queen, knave, and another—you should lead that suit in preference to your partner's, as you have distinct strength there, and your partner's call may not have been a very strong one; but when you have no suit in your own hand which you can open to advantage, then you should lead the highest card of your partner's declared suit, whatever it may be. There is no object in showing your partner that you have four of his suit against a strong suit declaration, as there can be no possible chance of bringing it in; therefore lead your highest, and hope that it may be of some use to him.

The only exception to this is when you hold a singleton. The singleton lead is a strong weapon of defence at ordinary Bridge, and it is a still stronger one at Auction Bridge against a high declaration. Many and many a call is defeated by the lead of a singleton, which must have succeeded with any other opening. Even if your partner has made a strong declaration by calling two or three tricks in a suit, your singleton is still the best lead, especially if you are guarded in trumps.

Suppose your partner has called "Two Diamonds," and been overcalled with "Two Hearts."

You hold ace and two little hearts, and a single club. You open with your single club; if, as is probable, the declarer wins the first club trick, you can stop the trump lead at once, and then lead a diamond to put your partner in, and he will give you your force at once. If you had opened the diamond suit first, you would probably not have had the chance of showing your partner that you wanted a force, until it was too late.

Failing any of the above combinations, if your partner has given you no indication, and you have a moderate hand, your opening lead should be carefully designed to do as little harm as possible before the Dummy hand is exposed. The very useful Bridge lead of a trump through the declaring hand does not exist, as the first lead at Auction Bridge is always up to the declarer; so that refuge is denied you, and it is sometimes very difficult to know what to do. An ace, king suit, or a king, queen suit is of course the best; failing these, anything in the shape of a sequence is useful, although the sequence only consists of two cards. The highest of queen, knave, and another, or of knave, ten, and another, is not a bad opening lead. If you have not got any one of those, you should lead the highest card of a weak suit, a doubleton, or a suit of three small cards. The great thing to avoid is leading away from guarded high cards, such as king and two others, queen, ten, and two others, or ace, knave, and another. Any suit is a bad one to open in

which you will probably be able to win a trick, or perhaps two tricks, if you do not open it yourself; and the higher the declaration is, the more important it becomes to treasure up any well-guarded high card which may win a trick if it is led up to.

When the declaration is a very high one, such as three tricks in a red suit, every possible trick in the other suits is of such great importance that it will often pay you best to lead a trump right up to the declaring hand. Suppose that your hand is—

♠	.....	Ace, Knave, 7
♥	.....	King, Knave, 9, 6, 4
♣	.....	King, 9, 5
♦	.....	5, 4

You have called "Two Hearts," and have been overcalled, on your right, with "Three Diamonds." The declarer has, obviously, the entire command of the diamond suit; but he has probably got to collect three tricks in outside suits, and he may find it very difficult to do so, unless you help him by leading some other suit up to him. If you put him in with a trump lead, he will extract all the trumps which are against him; but then he has to open another suit himself, and he does so at a manifest disadvantage.

The damage frequently done by that first blind lead is so very great, that it is worth risking something in order to get out of it, and the risk of leading a trump up to a three-trick call is very

slight. If the cards are at all equally divided, the opening of a fresh suit will probably entail a loss of one trick in that suit to the side which has to open it; and every trick is of enormous importance with a high call. It may seem a strong measure to open the game with a trump lead up to the declarer; but when you hold a well-guarded hand against a high trump call, it is often a lesser evil than opening one of your guarded suits.

When your partner has doubled a suit declaration, the situation, as regards the opening lead, remains very much the same. It can never be right to lead him a trump. That is probably the very last thing that he wants. If the declaration has been a very high one, it does not even follow that he has any strength in the trump suit; he is probably guarded in trumps, and very strong in the other suits. If he has made a previous suit declaration, you should lead his suit at once; if not, you should lead an ace, if you have one, so as to see the Dummy hand before proceeding further. If you have no winning card to lead, you should open your best suit—not your numerically best, but any suit in which you can afford him any assistance. If you have a singleton, and one or two small trumps, you should lead the singleton in preference to any other opening; but you should not now open a weak suit, as the aspect of affairs has changed, and your object should be to show your partner where you are able to assist him, rather than to play a purely defensive game.

## CHAPTER XI.

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### THE PLAY OF THE DECLARER.

THE player of the two hands at Auction Bridge (the declarer, as he is commonly called) has his task rendered somewhat easier for him by previous declarations which have been made. At ordinary Bridge the dealer starts with the knowledge of what strength is against him, but he has to pick up his information as to how this strength is distributed, as best he can, from the subsequent fall of the cards. The declarer at Auction Bridge has this information vouchsafed to him, more often than not, by the previous declarations, and therefore the play of the hand is more simple than at the ordinary game. It is very important for the declarer to remember all previous declarations which have been made by his opponents, as they will not only assist him to take finesses the right way, but they will also help him enormously in counting the cards towards the end of the hand.

The previous declarations have a strong negative value, as well as a positive one. There are certain declarations which are the obvious ones with which to overcall a previous call, such as "One Heart" over "One Diamond," or two tricks

in either red suit over a call of "One No Trump," and when the opponents do not make the obvious call, there is a strong presumption that they are not possessed of the requisite strength. A clever player is often able to draw valuable deductions, not so much from the calls which his opponents have made, as from obvious calls which they have not made, and which they would have been certain to make if they had been in a position to do so. This is a phase of the game which is generally overlooked, but it is a very useful one, and one which will sometimes enable the declarer to read the other hands in a way which appears to be little short of miraculous to the unintelligent onlooker.

The principal point in which the play of the declarer at Auction Bridge differs from the play of the dealer at ordinary Bridge is, that his first consideration must always be to fulfil his contract, before he thinks about winning the game. It frequently happens that the player of the two hands, either at "no trumps" or with a heart declaration, can see a certainty of winning two by cards; but he has the option of taking a finesse which will win the game if it succeeds, and will only result in the gain of one odd trick if it fails. At ordinary Bridge it is always right to go for the game, provided that the odd trick is secure; but at Auction Bridge, if the contract is "Two No Trumps" or "Two Hearts," it would be very bad play to risk losing the

contract for the possibility of winning the game, even if winning the game carried the rubber with it.

The penalty for failing to fulfil the contract is so heavy, that no such risks ought to be taken. First make sure of your contract, and then see what more you can do. There is not the same occasion as there is at ordinary Bridge to strain every nerve in order to win the game, whatever your opponents' score may be, because your opponents will have no advantage on the next deal. At ordinary Bridge, when your opponents are within a few points of game, there is a strong probability that they will win the game on their next deal if you do not win it on yours, and therefore it behoves you to run any reasonable risks; but at Auction Bridge this consideration does not come in at all. You will have exactly the same chances on the next deal as they will have, and the first and paramount consideration is to make the number of tricks which you have contracted to make, before thinking about anything else. Never lose sight of that. It is the one guiding star for the play of the declarer.

It is even more important to have a definite plan of campaign, and to form an estimate of the probable result of the hand directly the Dummy is exposed, as declarer at Auction Bridge, than as dealer at ordinary Bridge. Sometimes you may be able to see that a certain scheme

of play will win the game, if it is successful ; but when its not succeeding will entail the loss of your contract, put it behind you at once, and go for the certainty of getting what you have undertaken to get. Therein lies the road to safety and to ultimate success. In going for larger, but uncertain, possibilities lies the road to ruin.

On some unhappy occasions you will see at once that you have no chance of fulfilling your contract. When that is the case, you should try to secure what you can, and to minimise your loss as much as possible ; not go for wild chances in the hope of squeezing out of an impossible position—chances which will probably result in very serious loss. Losing 50 points above the line is no very grievous matter, but losing 150 or 200 points is serious, and will take a great deal of getting back against careful opponents.

The declarer can sometimes draw useful inferences from the opening lead, when there has been previous bidding for the declaration. Say that the leader has called "Two Diamonds," and has been overcalled, on his right, with "Two Hearts." If he does not open with a diamond, the declarer knows that he has not got both ace and king of diamonds, nor the king and queen, but that he wants the suit led up to him by his partner, for purposes of finessing. If the third player has called a suit, and the leader opens with a small card of another suit, it is almost a certainty that the card led is a singleton,

and the ace should be put on at once if it is in the Dummy hand.

An intelligent and observant player will draw many useful inferences from the previous bidding, and the negative inferences will be quite as useful to him as the positive ones. When a player has called two tricks in a suit, it does not require any great amount of intelligence to infer that he is strong in that suit—that is what I call a positive inference. The negative inferences are drawn from what a player does not declare. When the third player calls "Two Spades," there is the direct inference that he has neither the nucleus of a "no trump" hand, nor a fairly good suit of either hearts or diamonds. When a player has called "One Diamond," and has been overcalled with "One Heart," if his partner does not support him with a call of "Two Diamonds," both opponents should realise that the partner has a **very** moderate hand, with no support in the diamond suit, and no great strength in the other suits.

These sort of examples could be multiplied to any extent, and the inferences that can be drawn in this way are extremely valuable, both in the bidding and in the subsequent play of the hand. A curious feature of the game is that so many players, even good players, seem to fail to notice these inferences at all, or do not regard them as being reliable. "How could I tell that so-and-so had not got this or that high card?" they will ask, after the hand. The obvious answer to that question would be,

“If he had held it, he would certainly have supported his partner’s call,” or “he would have declared ‘no trumps.’” A careful observation of the high cards which a player produces in the early stages of the game will often be of great assistance in placing other high cards towards the end of the hand.

To attempt to give any instruction, or even any hints, as to the way in which the player of the two hands should conduct his business, would merely be a repetition of what has already been written so often about the play of the dealer at ordinary Bridge. Every Bridge player of any experience knows it all by heart ; and what applies to the one game applies equally well to the other. After the first card is led, the declarer can see twenty-seven out of the fifty-two cards, and he is bound to have gathered some information, either positive or negative, from the previous bidding for the declaration. If he cannot, under these conditions, play his cards to the best advantage, he is beyond all hope, and no amount of instruction will ever help him.



## CHAPTER XII.

### THE PLAY OF THE OPPOSITION.

AFTER the final declaration has been accepted, and the first card led, the play of the cards at Auction Bridge hardly differs at all from that of ordinary Bridge. The principles involved are the same, the lines of play are the same, and the methods employed by the best players are identically the same in the one game as in the other. Even the conventions are the same, with the single exception of the heart convention, in answer to a double of "no trumps." The "call for a ruff," the "call for a suit," the "echo" at "no trumps" to show four in the suit which your partner has opened, the lead of the ace before the king to show only two, all obtain at Auction Bridge just the same as in the ordinary game.

It would only be a waste of time and space to go over the well-trodden ground once more, and to enlarge upon the general principles of play with which my readers are already so well acquainted; therefore I shall content myself with drawing attention to a few minor points in which there is a slight difference, or which I consider need to be specially emphasised.

The principal point of difference is that, at Auction Bridge, in defending the game, there are two goals to strive for instead of only one—firstly, to prevent your opponents winning the game; and secondly, to endeavour to defeat their declaration and to get them under their contract. Between these two there is no middle point worth thinking about. Your first object should always be to save the game, just as at ordinary Bridge; but, when the saving of the game is assured, you ought to run any risk, or to play for any coup, however desperate, which may enable you to defeat the call, if it comes off.

In your laudable endeavour to get your opponents under their contract, you should never bother your head about the possibility of losing an extra trick or two, provided that it does not entail losing the game. The value of each trick is the same as at ordinary Bridge; but the figures of the rubber are so much higher, that the loss of an extra trick is comparatively of very little importance; and the fact of your having allowed your opponents to get to 18, or even to 24, when you could have left them at 12, need not worry you at all. A very large majority of games at Auction Bridge are won, or would have been won, from the score of love. The gradual piling up of the score, until you arrive within an easy distance of game, which we all know so well at Bridge, does not exist at Auction Bridge.

I do not pretend to say that there is no advantage

in being 24 up; but I do say, and I wish to emphasise it very strongly, that the advantage of being 24 up at Auction Bridge is out of all comparison with the same position at ordinary Bridge, and that playing to the score is a very small factor in the game. The state of the score may, and often does, affect the declaration a great deal; but it should never be allowed to affect the play of the hand as far as regards winning or losing an extra unimportant trick. There are the two definite objects to play for—saving the game, and defeating the call; no other consideration should ever be allowed to enter into the calculations of the opposition.

I said, in a previous chapter, that it is not always desirable to give information to the table in general. This applies only to the bidding for the declaration, not to the play of the hand. The whole scheme of the declaration is diametrically opposed to ordinary Bridge, but the correct play of the cards by the defenders is precisely the same, and it is just as important to give your partner every possible information at Auction Bridge as it is at the other game. The same methods of play should be adopted, the same leads, the same conventions, the same discards, and the same signals. Just as at ordinary Bridge, the more simple and straightforward you make the game, and the less fancy-work you put into it, the more easy it will be for your partner to understand you, and to work in his hand with yours to your mutual advantage.

The first opening lead is always a blind one at ordinary Bridge, but it is not always so at Auction Bridge. The third player will often have been able to indicate his suit to his partner, and the opening lead is then no longer a blind one. It follows that the third player will frequently be able to win the first trick, and when he does so it is for him to determine how the defence of the hand can best be conducted. He should take his time about it, and should study the Dummy hand carefully, and try to form some sort of estimate of the probable result of the hand. Let him first satisfy himself that the game is safe, and then see whether there is any likelihood of defeating the call. If there is—if he can see that one or two named cards in his partner's hand will defeat the contract—he ought to go for that chance at once, and to play as if he knew that those named cards were there, regardless of the fact that he may lose an extra trick by so doing.

If the dealer does not begin with a suit which his partner has declared, the third player should ask himself what reason he can have, and the reason ought not to be difficult to find. It will either be that he has none of the suit, or that he has a good suit of his own, or that the first lead was a singleton.

When the declaration is a very high one, and the leader has doubled, it does not in the least follow that he wants his partner to lead him a trump; probably quite the reverse. If there is any chance

of the Dummy hand getting a ruff, the third player should always lead a trump directly he gets in; but otherwise the trump lead early in the game is more likely to do harm than good. If the declarer does not lead trumps himself, he has some object in not leading them, and it is generally right for his opponents to do it for him; but it is very important for a beginner to understand that doubling a high suit call at Auction Bridge is a very different matter from doubling a suit declaration at ordinary Bridge, and that it does not convey the same request to a partner to lead a trump through the declaring hand.

One and all of the general principles of defending a hand at ordinary Bridge apply equally to Auction Bridge: the leading through strength and up to weakness; the holding up the command of a long suit in Dummy when he has no card of re-entry; never finessing against one's partner; never leading a card which will enable the declarer to trump in one hand and discard from the other; and, above all, never playing a false card. False cards are nearly always bad at Bridge; but they are still worse at Auction, and often do a terrible amount of harm.

It is worth bearing in mind that "no trump" declarations are made a great deal more lightly at Auction Bridge than at the other game, and that there is not the smallest occasion to be frightened by them. The declaration of "One No Trump" is often made by the dealer or his partner as being

the only means of escape from the compulsory black suit declaration, and it may be a very slender one indeed. At ordinary Bridge, even the most reckless players require to have some sort of justification for a "no trump" call; but at Auction Bridge the declaration is sometimes made on the most shadowy of pretexts, and it is a mistake for the defenders to argue that the declarer must hold certain high cards, or he would not have been justified in calling "One No Trump." He probably was not justified, but he did it as a *dernier ressort*, either to get out of a black suit declaration, or to bid his opponents up.

Always remember that every fresh suit which you or your partner open is a distinct disadvantage to you, especially in a "no trump" game. However high the declaration may have been, the declarer's hand will not be entirely composed of winning cards. When he has made a very high suit declaration, he has certainly got a great many trumps, and can stand being forced to almost any extent; but every time that you force him he has to open some other suit, and that is probably just what he does not want to do.

When he is marked with winning cards in another suit, you cannot prevent his making them, if he has the entire command of trumps; therefore you will do much better by putting him in again with his own suit than by opening another one up to him. His winning cards will eventually be exhausted, and then he will have to lead away,

possibly from a guarded king, which he has been trusting to win a trick with, if that suit was opened for him.

The great thing in defending a game is to realise exactly what you are playing for—how many tricks you require to save the game, and how many tricks are required to defeat the contract. These two points should never be lost sight of, and you should always keep yourself posted as to how the game is progressing, how many tricks you have got, how many you still require, and how many more you are likely to get.

Any would-be Auction Bridge player, who is not thoroughly conversant with the rudiments of ordinary Bridge, will do well to buy himself a copy of "Bridge Abridged," or of one of the many other Bridge manuals; and therein he will find, laid down for his guidance, a full table of all the accepted leads, and a more or less exhaustive treatise on the general principles of the play of the cards, together with certain hints to beginners, and a description of all the established conventions of the game.

To those who have served their apprenticeship at ordinary Bridge, the only advice that can be given is to follow the lines of play of the older game as closely as possible, with the few exceptions which have been set forth above.

## CHAPTER XIII.

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MAXIMS IN BRIEF.

THE deal is a disadvantage, rather than an advantage.

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Always try to win the first game. The winners of the first game are in a fine position, as they can afford to lie low, and to nurse their opponents to any extent.

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When your opponents are far ahead—say, one game, and 16 or 18 up towards the next—do not play a waiting game, but try to equalise matters by winning the second game as soon as possible.

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The keynote of Auction Bridge is, that it frequently pays better to defeat your opponents' call than to score yourself.

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Two-thirds of your profit at Auction Bridge, if any, will be derived from your opponents' failures; the remaining one-third from your own successes.

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A rubber won in two hands will rarely exceed 400 points; but a rubber in which your opponents have been defeated several times, may amount to upwards of 1000 points.

—————

You can only win the game once, but you can defeat your opponents' call any number of times.

—————

Remember that your opponents can never win a game on your declaration.

—————

The loss, above the line, for failing in your contract is always the same. Losing one trick at "no trumps" costs no more than losing one trick in spades.

—————

⌈ Distinguish between a voluntary declaration and a forced declaration. There is a vast amount of difference between the two. ⌋

—————

Auction Bridge is essentially a game of aces and kings, as against numerical strength. On a forced declaration, or for purposes of giving information to your partner, ace, king, and one other, is a better suit to declare than five to a knave.

One extra trick, won or lost, which affects neither game nor contract, is a very small matter, and not worth bothering about.

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The declarer's first object should always be to fulfil his contract; his second object, to win the game.

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The defenders' first object should always be to save the game; their second, to defeat the call.

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Against an original "no trump" declaration a black suit is a better opening than a red one.

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"No trumps" should be declared very much lighter than at ordinary Bridge, because the possible gain is so great; while the possible loss is exactly the same as with a spade declaration.

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"No trumps" is the best declaration, for four reasons—

1. Because it gives the greatest chance of winning, and only an equal chance of losing.

2. Because the player of the two hands has a much greater advantage at "no trumps" than with a suit declaration.
  3. Because it prevents your opponents declaring "no trumps."
  4. Because it shuts out black suit declarations altogether; and it compels your opponents to declare two tricks in either red suit in order to overcall you.
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There are times when it is right to declare above the value of your hand, and there are times when it is right to declare below it. Experience alone will teach you when to push a hand, and when to hold your tongue.

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Doubling is an important factor in the game of Auction Bridge. The real object of the bidding is to force your opponents up to a point at which you can double them with advantage.

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It is hardly ever advisable to double a one-trick call.

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Never double when your opponents have the chance of switching to another, and safer, declaration. Rather be content with defeating their call undoubled.

The time to double to great advantage is when you can also double any higher call which your opponents are likely to make.

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Learn to distinguish between a dangerous double and a free double. A "free" double is when the declaration made is sufficient to win the game.

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To double a very high suit call, it is not necessary to have pronounced strength in the trump suit. A call of "Three Hearts" or "Three Diamonds" can well be doubled with one probable trick in trumps, and considerable strength in the other suits.













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